

The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 12.44



*I don't know why I don't cry, 'cause I'm in so much pain
from my mom having me in birth but a stranger raising me like their own son.
As the sun comes, the rain and clouds must follow.
Someday, I will change my path so it will make me open a new door.*

read the rest of Maurice's POW on page 4

Hey editorial note readers, another week of getting The Beat Within out to you, regretfully we are missing a number of units in this issue that are relevant to the topics too. To keep it simple, we have no excuse. It sure is a busy time and the demand is overwhelming, but nothing we can't handle. Shoot, we're all busy! Ok as for the missing units, all we can say to you writers who have searched high and low in this issue for your work, we are sorry, and the great thing about The Beat Within publication is that we are a weekly, so there's next week! Until then, enjoy this still very fabulous publication featuring stellar pieces coming out of the 12.44 writing workshops.

The topics featured in this issue were excellent, as we think the writings will showcase. We know in recent weeks, in our workshops we've been having great discussions on the topics, so we are thankful when you writers step up in our workshops as writers. What we really love is when you same writers courageously step up at the end of the workshop session and read your pieces aloud to the group. Talking about courage, damn that's courage!!

Our first topic is "Desperation" - What comes to mind when you hear the word "desperate?" We're sure all of you have found your selves in a desperate situation, being in the criminal justice system. Desperate could be living on the edge and doing whatever it took to survive, to feeling desperate in getting answers, to a desperate feeling when you're locked up and you're missing out on what is happening back home. This week, describe a time you felt desperate or you witnessed someone else's desperate act.

Our second topic, "In The Past Years..." - Think back on the years that just past... What pain have you caused to others within those years? Whether it's your family, your victim, or even your community, what pain have you caused them and what pain have they caused you? Can you describe the pain and the hardships it's brought you and others? Who have you hurt in the past years? Remember not to incriminate yourself if you choose to write about this topic

The third topic, "Being Pressured" - Have you ever been pressured into doing something you didn't want to do? Who forced or persuaded you to do things that you didn't want to do? What stopped you from saying no? Did you do it because you felt like you had to do it? What did you get out of it? What were the consequences? Would you let people influence you to do it again?

Last but not least, "That Animal" - If You Could Choose An Animal That Best Describes You, What Would It Be? Please describe the reason behind your choice

From the above topics, many writers revealed plenty about themselves, as is usually the case when you honestly take a good look at yourself and step up as thinker/writer. You talented writers usually write about how much regret and sadness comes from this life one chooses and that brings you into custody, or you step up as the tough guy/gal and chalk it up as a loss, as they already are talking the talk on how they will do big things when they get out and return to the streets.

We can't say this enough, but The Beat never pushes a writer to write on something they do not feel good about. For example we never want you to write about changing your life if you have no desire to change. We want you to keep it real and we'll keep it real with our thoughts when we respond.

Sure, one never thinks of coming to jail when they're free doing their thang, (or do you?), but once you get swooped up and you find yourself locked in your cell alone and sober, all you have is time to think and think and think. With thinking, comes new revelations on how to live a healthy life, possibly further depression, and hopefully thoughts on how to live a life free of drama and hate. With incarceration can be the beginning of a new chapter!! Can you start fresh while in jail? Of course you can! It's all in your mind. Starting a new beginning in the system is a great place to begin the journey home away from the sickness that is keeping way too many good young (and old) people down.

We like the idea that many of you truly take advantage of writing in The Beat by sharing your game plan, sharing your goals, sharing your life with us all, as you all are probably inspiring many readers to see a new way to see that it is OK to change, and change aloud to the many readers of The Beat. We love that so many of you over the years have used us as a resource and guide to a better life. We love how many of you writers have the courage to share and by you all sharing your pains, loves, dreams and hate, has given others the sign that it is fine to be yourself, and that's not a bad thing at all!

We know how hard life is for many of you and how many of you find yourself running and running looking for a change to come, yet fear facing your truths. Yeah it's hard living, especially when you are in denial. Yeah, as tough as many of you are or want us to think, we know none of you want to die by a gun or live in the system as a number. There is no coming back once you dead. There is no getting an out of jail free pass if you do the crime. It's a long time coming, but a change has got to come. We need to figure out how to go to our neighbors, our families and community based organizations for help and support, 'cause we need to do this together, as a team, if we are serious about getting off the streets, into school or a legit paying job, and changing our lives for the better. We need to make it our mission in life to show the younger generation that we aren't afraid to change and to ask for help, and that they can easily too. We want to show the community that we are serious about finding improvement in our selves and in our world, 'cause none of us want our loving children growing up in neighborhoods with gun toting thugs, dope fiends and hate the way too many of us are living. This is plain wrong.

We know most of your parents and guardians probably did not want this tragic life for you either, yet here you sit. What went wrong? Who is at fault? What needs to be fixed (besides you)? By us saying this, is our society that out of whack? Is our future that bleak and hopeless? We say do not look at it this way, look at it on a positive tip, that is if you are really serious about improving yourself. By you taking charge of your life is the first step and that's very important. By taking charge means being a leader for a better you and better community. The road is not going to be smooth, but the road wasn't smooth doing negative, so if you do positive, it will only get smoother as you transition your life for the better!

This one goes out Washington Redskin defensive back football player, #21, Shawn Taylor who was murdered in his home during a botched up robbery. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his friends and family.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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This Desperation!

Searching for a better way
 But rainy days have been embedded in my brain
 No light from the sun mayne I'm going insane
 Feeling like I sniffed a whole Colombian key 'cause my
 heart is numb to pain
 Tattoos on my body for various stories I cannot verbally
 explain
 Used to play with fire as a child but now I'm running
 from the flames
 Obsessed with guns and fascinated by the damage they
 do at close range
 Walking around the hood with pistols tucked in my
 Hanes
 8 years old and papa's showing me how to fill a clip with
 hollow tips
 Pull the hammer back squeeze the trigger and let'em rip
 Witnessed things in these streets that'll make a Vietnam
 vet sick
 My mind frames distorted and my thought's tend to twist
 Post-war syndrome ain't got nothing on this
 See things in my sleep that make me wanna wake up
 screaming
 Speak to the Lord every night but nothing seems to stop
 these demons
 Been to hell and back but still in search for life's
 meaning.

-Kastro, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We understand that desperation can interrupt while you concentratin' on all those negative thoughts you need to start eliminatin' you searching for better ways/ But it's up to you start seeing them better days/ It's your choice, your life, to live life by the pistol/ 'Cause when you get out, it's up to you to stop packin', and them rainy days wouldn't be an issue.

Years Wasted

In the past year or so, really not that long ago
 I put the football down and picked up some rocks
 My mom might find it so I gotta put it in my socks
 Momma used to say,
 "go to school make good grades"
 Ok momma,
 but the truth was I was going to get paid
 I came home everyday with no homework
 but countin' money
 I forgot, momma ain't stupid, she ain't no dummy
 School called my momma,
 I missed too many days
 To busy getting' paid
 and not worried about the A's
 How you missing days and you go every day?
 I do go to school jus' a different way
 Jus' then boom, boom the door falls down
 Every body I mean every body on the ground
 "What's going on?" momma said
 "Well your son here been selling to crack heads"
 They haul me off, momma in tears
 I was supposed to be her NFL superstar
 in a couple years
 Locked up now in jail
 even though I'm in here
 She's living in hell

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: No matter how much we try to hide things from our mothers, some how they always know when we are doing wrong, even if we don't get caught. Show your mother you can be her superstar (football or not) and take her out of the life she has to live in.

Halloween

Darkness fills the sky, with vision of demon fill my eyes
 As the bats soar high, taking shape of the dark sky
 The wolf becomes prowling, as the night hears it's
 howling
 Pumpkins all around, with faces showing no frowns
 Ghouls and ghost causing fright, witches and warlock
 taking flight
 People wondering in the night, off looking for a fright
 Youngsters roaming all about, showing all those pout
 Buzzing for those treats, waiting to do that trick
 Mayhem all around, as terror fills the towns
 People causing fire, dancing around that inferno tire
 Connecting to those heads, that remain to the dead
 Marking the end of a falling season, and the rise of a
 freezing season
 Celebrating the times of saints, a holiday of souls
 Honoring the ghost of the dead, for winter isn't far ahead
 A night of trick or treat, a tribute of haunting and horror
 As the night end, with silence all around
 With everything calming down
 Remembering this day on October 31st
 For ever known as Halloween

-Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Nice descriptive poem! You have real talent! You did a good job really describing the fact that Halloween does mark the end of the season, and it's the beginning of another. Keep that good writing coming.

My Pain Is My Name

My pain is so crucial to myself and to others.
 I see their eyes filling with blood, tears rolling down their
 cheeks.
 My life has been like animals
 tearing me apart with their fangs of pain into my life.
 My heart beats only sometimes, for my life is not mine.
 Someone's fighting me as I watch TV.
 I don't know why I don't cry, 'cause I'm in so much pain
 from my mom having me in birth but a stranger raising me
 like their own son.
 As the sun comes, the rain and clouds must follow.
 Someday, I will change my path so it will make me open a
 new door.
 Love doesn't come into my life as it does into others,
 but it has come and will again, even if I wish it won't.
 Like a man spoke, "love is a season, not a feeling and if it
 was, we all would feel it."
 My heart feels like nails
 piercing through it and someone's playing a game with my
 life,
 but as I strive to keep on going, my heart keeps on beating.
 For I have no name. Everyone sees me as "Smokey", the one
 and only,
 that you can beat on and he won't feel it.
 He will not even say nothing as you bust his brain, he still
 won't go insane.
 Like bugs, I wonder what the planet will be without me,
 so please forgive me if I grow tired of the pain and go
 insane.
 Don't forget the name, Smokey, the one and only, aka the
 insane.

-Maurice, Alameda

From The Beat: We can only imagine the pain that you are in, and our hearts go out to you while you figure out your next move in this struggle. Perhaps it feels like your life is not your own because everyone is seeing you (and you are seeing yourself) as a target, a victim, as deserving of pain and abuse. Maybe there is another you inside, who can open new doors and who deserves to experience love? It's up to each of us how we see ourselves in the world. Maybe you don't have to wait to change your path. It might be scary at first, but a whole new world awaits.

Me

My name is Anthony
I was prematurely born
March 21, 1991.
I like to charm people,
turning cheeks red of
blush for fun,
a nice thing as a youngster
I gave my sucker to a girl,
crying
It was my favorite flavor
Always on my best
behavior
All that "nice" was put to
a halt by the age of seven,
when I started using
words of choice
Then escalated to
stealing, then being the
neighborhood bad-ass
Slashing tires, harassing
ice cream men in trucks
When I was questioned, all
I had was an explanation
of "cause, I don't give a
shhh",
and such.
Now that I am in this cell,
thinking back
Maybe my mom needed to
deliver a harder smack
I never thought I was
doing anything wrong
Turns out that that's not
the right song for young
kids
and that lil' bad asses end
up being suckered into
crimes
ending up incarcerated
When people told me
about the route I was on, I

always hated that talk.
Seemed like it took
forever
with a response of "never
will I get caught".
"Never say never!!"
(Frustrated by an accusing
person)
While being accused,
rushing thoughts of
violence crawl through my
brain
making it throb with anger
and pain for the fact that
he or she is accusing
without a fact.
I feel the tensions of
asking God to send upon
him a wrath of bad as a
punishment
but instead I plan to do it
myself, robbing them of
life, money, and even their
belt.
I know that by doing this
it puts me that much
closer to the devils lair.
The fear of that is the only
thing keeping me hand-
cuffed, feeling unfair.

-Anthony, Alameda

From The Beat: Brilliant poem, tracing your own personal history. Now that you are thinking about the negative effect that going down the wrong path and giving up your freedom has on your life, does it make you want to do things differently? Maybe your anger and sense of unfairness can fuel your desire to do other things, to write, to recapture some of the generosity and openness of your young days, rather than to seek revenge and end up incarcerated again. What do you think about this?

I Like It Here

Pain that I have caused others is pain to my family. I have caused too much pain to my family. Have had my mom come see me in jail, and failed to be there for my brothers.

To tell the truth, I like it here. I can't lie. It's something about it, maybe having the extra time that I never have on the outs. Maybe it's knowing that I don't have to watch my back. Maybe it's the chance I get to stop drinking and smoking. Maybe it's knowing the ramifications of the path that I'm going. Maybe it's the chance to get away from the cruel reality. Maybe it's the search for refuge. Maybe it's because I can't abuse my freedom. Maybe it's the only place I can dream. Maybe it's the relaxation. Maybe it's the only place I feel free.

-Lil' Roach, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's a very hard thing to realize that we live in a society where, for some, it is easier to be locked up than to be free! There is a truly painful honesty about this admission that forces readers to think about their own contributions (as well as your own) to this kind of society. Since you are a thinker who is taking advantage of this time out, what is happening in your mind? Are there changes in the wind? What do you foresee?

Freedom

I hate being here, and I'm positive everyone feels the same way. Writing to the Beat helps my thoughts to be heard.

To all those people out there on the outs don't realize how good freedom is and that bothers me because I've had my freedom taken away in the snap of a finger. I hear from my family all the fun things I miss on the outs like Halloween, freedom and good hot food, respect and music. All these things have vanished in such a quickness.

The day I step out in the world again I will be changed. My outlook from this whole experience is I would never ever see myself back once I depart from the germ-infested cesspool hole. I'm happy I'm still young so that I learn this early, and I can pass my knowledge to the more fortunate person so they will never experience this the way I have.

-Koh Deen Juggalo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The lesson you have learned by having your freedom taken is one of the most important lessons there is: Time is all we have in the world, and giving it away is a sign that you do not respect yourself or others. But we can tell from your determination that you do respect yourself, and in that respect you will find a way to keep your freedom. Keep teaching as many as you can this important lesson!

Help: A Prayer

Non-stop rain with thunder and lighting
I was up all night screaming and fighting
Crying, asking God to take control of my life
To keep me from the shameful things
And bring me peace and light on my darkness
Keep me from the things that make me as a criminal
In the eyes of society they swear that I'm a rebel
I wish I had done things differently,
Wished I hadn't given my pain to other people
And people that I love
But things happen so all I can do now is
Ask god to forgive me for my sins.
Amen.

-Fed-Up Beam, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope God grants this prayer and guides your future while forgiving your past. All of us have done things for which we'd like to be forgiven, though not all of us have the courage to put it in words. Thank you for yours.

For Those Street Soldiers

This is for those who
walk these dangerous
streets,
with no fear in their eyes
and no time to weep,
because all their hope
has been taken away
by those who are
determined
to have things their way.
These soldiers walk these
streets day by day,
looking for a better way to
stay
alive another day.
Memories of playing on
the sidewalks
now seem to fade away
to stay alive another day,
memories of playing on
the sidewalks
now seem to fade away
to only be replaced with
a war zone where

dead friends and
relatives now lay.
Governors tell us that
"Everything is okay," then
why do they walk out of
their
homes and fear for their
lives?
They've been told to stay
strong
and yet through everyday
changes,
and to stay sane, even
though they've taken
all the blame for those
mistakes
that they didn't make.
They survive these
obstacles day by day
and these are the soldiers
I respect these days.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sapita, your poetry continues to impress us. You have a real sensitivity to the daily struggle of people. Your writing especially shines when you look outside yourself. Keep writing, always.

I Disappoint Myself

I blocked my mind with clouds,
hid my pain with a match,
lit my sorrow away.
But it always came back.

Thought I could ease memories
with every puff that I took
so I lit up a blunt
and decided to smoke.

I thought I could ease my pain
with every rock I smashed.
Chopped up my pain with a cord,
smoothing it over my cracks.

Divided my pain into lines
and let my dollar bill pay its way.
Numbed my pain with the devil's candy.
Started doing yay.

When that couldn't help anymore
I decided to drown my weakness in a mug.
Popped open silver chamber cells -
emptied it with one chug.

Took my pain and hurt
And hid it from my fears.
Pounced every aluminum cube,
started drinking beer.

Got drunk to forget everything
so I could forget I had messed up.
It only took me so far,
it only built the memories up!

When I couldn't drink no more,
when the pain hurt to the max,
I got frustrated with life.
Then the memories came back.

I felt so disappointed with myself
because I hid my pain with drugs,
let it take control of my life
and shoved away all the love.

I couldn't understand why?
But at the time I didn't care.
Disappointment was my friend
and the drugs were always there.
Damn, disappointment.

-Lady Joker, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Heck of a poem Lady Joker. You should begin to think seriously about writing your story. You're very talented. Write to us from the outs. As for your problem with drugs and drinking, what's the plan to not let them get the best of you?

Being Pressured

I've been doing shhh and too much one night I bought a gun to take a ninja out.

I found the ninja and I hopped out the car and stuck the gun out at him my friends told me to shoot him and I did now I see that person before I go to sleep and when I awake it's scary I wish I never did it peace.

-Pained

From The Beat: What give you the right to take someone's life? You took someone's life that you probably didn't know. You risk your freedom, your life, all because someone told you what to do. You take somebody's else son, brother, cousin, best friend. You affect everybody's life, including yours, just because you got pressured. If you like being told what to do, maybe you should stay in this facility because staff can tell you what to do all day. Plus, society is safer with you locked up.

Earthquake In San Jose!

What up Beat and Beaters? How's it hanging?

Well I hope all is well. Today I'm gonna write about the earthquake we had on the 30th of October. That was some crazy ass shhh!

I was in my room reading the last issue of The Beat that they gave us like two weeks ago, when all of a sudden my room started shaking side to side.

At first I thought I had a really bad head rush, but then I heard some screaming outside my room and I realized there was an earthquake going on.

Man! There was a lot of crazy nonsense going through my head. I thought the top of the tier was gonna fall on top of the bottom tier. I was scared as hell because I thought I was gonna die getting smashed by all the bricks on the top tier.

I started thinking how much I regret making my mom feel like shhh all those times I didn't listen to her. I was also thinking about how much pain and sorrow other people's mothers were gonna feel when they find out one of their sons or daughters got killed by an earthquake. I started feeling extremely sorry for my family and the families of the others that I thought were gonna die.

Damn! It's funny that I thought about so much stuff in only fifteen seconds. My mind is usually too lazy to think.

The good thing is that no one died and the earthquake was only a 5.6, unlike the one that happened in 1989. I heard from other adults that the one in 1989 was hella scary and people actually did die. Plus, it was a 7.1 and the one from the 10-30-07 was nothing compared to the one in '89.

Well, that's all for today, Beat. To all: Be safe. Peace!

-Sad Boy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Yes, that earthquake went on long enough to really shake up our minds and fears. Even though it was scary, it is profound to think about the earth moving below us. It seemed like it made you think about a lot of things - maybe it stirred up your mind enough to help you want to make some serious changes - or at least get more prepared for the Big One they say is coming in the next 20 years.

Desperado

When I hear the word desperate I think about some of my past acts. There has been times when I really needed money whether it was to buy some grapes, or go to the movies etc. The way I see it desperate times call for desperate acts.

I've done some pretty stupid shhh in my life for money. I've fought my dogs for money knowing if they lost I didn't have the money to pay off the debts. So my dogs had to be the best no matter what. I learned at a young age that nothing comes free in life and me being a kid who grew up with nothing but the love and support of my family, I knew there had to be more out there for me and I wanted it all. What can I say I was young, dumb, and desperate.

When I wanted something there's no question about it I was gonna get it no matter what, but in the end I gotta ask myself this, was it worth it, was it worth getting myself locked up for? I don't know but I know this, if I could do it all over again I would, because it was my mistakes that made me the way I am today. I've learned a lot throughout my bad experiences, and in a way I think it made me a better person. I mean think about it what if I never got locked up would I still be doing the same stupid shhh?

-Taylore, Alameda

From The Beat: Well you live and you learn. But being desperate to go the movies, or get grapes? You call that desperate? We're glad to learn that least you recognize that you were doing stupid shhh. Forget about your past and move on. You can start fresh when you get out. Learn from your bad experiences and don't repeat the same mistakes. What's the plan?

The Past

Intro:

In the past year, all I've ever seen was tears from the ninjas I hurt. Makin' rings in my ears, bustin' shots in the air,

hell na, I don't care.

I been here for the past couple of years in and out of jail, that's my life and it feels like hell.

My past years been shady,
just like a dream

and when I wake up sometimes I scream

but I won't cry only when I die,

Tellin' my years might make you cry...

My Life

It was like a dream comin' into the world. One day old, a 16-year-old girl not ready to take care of another life so let me tell you the story of a kid livin' life. I remember livin' real happy; it was me, my Dad and Mom. I was spoiled, anything I wanted I had, a super Nintendo and a Sega.

My mom was still young, so she was still out and about. My Dad was getting' his money grindin'. I would tag along wit' Moms and get dropped off with her friends while she went somewhere. They be smokin' hella weed, drankin' and shhh on the block, and I'd go to the other room to see older guys wit' lighters to a spoon.

I didn't know what it was. I never really spent time wit' my mom.

Later I'd get dropped off wit' my dad at my Grandma's house and watch cartoons all day.

My favorites were Flintstones, Jetsons, Rocky and Bullwinkle. My dad would always be gone too. Every night at home, Mom wouldn't show so they fought and argued most of the time, until they broke up.

I was like three. Me and my dad would ride around lookin' for my mom. We'd find her and they'd argue over who's gonna take me, so finally they agreed I would go wit' her that day. It would be fun to me, just ridin' around breathin' clouds of smoke and watchin' 'em drink.

Then later I would go back to my dad. It went the same

for a long time, until one day my dad was drunk and he took me to her and I hugged him hard. Then I was back in my mom's arms waving bye; and then pow, pow, pow, he started bustin' at my moms, she threw us in the house and we just cried. There was a hole in the door and the police came.

The next morning I got dropped off to my grandma's house, my mom told me she loved me and I'll see her again she promised.

I didn't know what was going on, my dad was in jail, he went to prison for a couple of years. I was five when he got out.

They enrolled me into Hawthorne Elementary school and most of us kids learned too much on the streets, so that's what we brought to school. We used to fight a lot, feel on the girls (they didn't mind) curse a lot and gang-bang. But we all did our little work too so the teacher wouldn't really mind us. But she was crippled and old so maybe that was another reason (Ms. Larson RIP) I finished Kindergarten and First grade. I got mad 'cause my same classmates weren't there, so I choked a kid out and threw a chair at a teacher. I got suspended for a week.

My dad was on heroin, so I got my ass beat hella bad. Everyday after school I would get the shhh beat out of me for not giving him my little money. He told me he was saving it for me and we would go to the deep, so he could get it.

One time the police hit and he made me hide with 'em and I never knew why, but all this time I wondered where's my mom? I'll call her and she'd say she's on her way, but most of the time she'd never show. I hate both of 'em.

Since I was six years old, the same thing went on for years. Now I'm a roamin' the streets of Oakland by myself... To be continued.

-Angelo, Alameda

From The Beat: You have been through it, and through it, and through it, and like you said, it'll make a reader cry. But it will also make a reader impressed - with you because you survived it, because you went through things that would have broken a weaker person, and yet you can still tell what happened to you with such a skill and emotional power. What does that mean? It means that you own your story, your story doesn't have to own you. Keep going, next week brings Part 2.

Random Mind Of Mine

Why are you called The Beat Within?

Is it for the actual hearts we have still on the ins?

Or does it simply mean something else?

Are all people that have been locked up always mean and nasty?

Why does it matter what I was locked up for?

If you don't like what I say, why listen?

If you like what I say, why not take what you want and leave the bullshhh?

Why do I have this anger in me?

Can it be released?

Or can I simply pass it on like a hit of some weed?

Am I crazy or am I sane?

Fudge, I don't care if you think what's lame.

Why do I love hate?

It is so beautiful to me.

I have a twisted mind and I'm not sure if you care to hear what it tells me everyday.

What's the point of being normal to me, just who I fudging am...

my mind is random as it goes from one place to another.

And then it goes blank, my mind never stops working, it goes on and on like the Energizer Bunny.

I fudging hate it when people talk behind my back - it

trips me out.

Why do I care what people think?

This is me - take what you like and leave the rest.

Don't disrespect me because I'll say it right back.

I don't like to fight, but I will if I have to.

People think I'm nothing until I come back and pick you up.

I usually don't keep grudges but why do I hate?

My feelings never be numb unless I'm dancing with some rum.

I'm tired of this shhh.

I think I have a black heart.

I still love the smell of victory.

I'll win this battle of the system.

They popped me like a pill, chewed and spit me out like I was shhh

once they got their money. They start to laugh.

I'm done writing because I'm staring into blackness and it is now time

to start to actually handle my business...

-Yogi Bear, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Mr. Yogi, you really dug into the depths of your mind and let it all loose here and we thank you for that. This is some of the best stream-of-consciousness writing we've ever read. You should check out some writers like Jack Kerouac and even the old southern writer William Faulkner, who has some great moments of writing like this in his famous novel "The Sound and the Fury."

In The Past Years

The pain I've caused my family, staying out getting drunk, never coming home. I don't know why I did this. Now I feel like I'm alone. I wish I never caused them pain. If I could go back then I would. I would never hurt my family, not even if I could.

Never hurt your family. Don't be like me. Have fun. Don't ruin your life and don't be a dummy. Getting locked up... it sucks real bad. I wish I never would have done what I had. Being locked up when you're gang affiliated ain't no fun. You have to do things you wish you hadn't done.

Now I stay up every night praying for a second chance. I know that God won't let me down. He'll lift me up when I feel there's no other way. I miss my family so much that I cry. Without them to have my back I probably would have died. Late homies. Stay up!

-L, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's no fun for anyone, whether affiliated or not, to lose their freedom. The pain that you've caused your family (and yourself) cannot be undone. The past is the past. But it can guide you into a better future where you are able to keep your promise not to hurt them again. If you do what you should be doing with your life (going to school, respecting your parents, not hurting others), then the pain you have caused will be forgotten and replaced with respect and satisfaction.

These Past Years

This topic shot out at me. I see pain every day while I'm in here. Not only with inmates, but from my family and friends, too. Every visit, my dad has that look of despair, and it attacks me because it's my fault. I feel it when letters are sent to me because most write about how sorry they are because I'm in here.

I'm glad to know people care, but it crushes me at the same time because the pain and sorrow they feel is due to me. It makes me feel horrible, almost sick, because of all the pain I caused that should not have happened. The pain I caused is not something I should have done.

-Friend Of His, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We can tell that you have a lot of remorse for what you've done. Remorse is only valuable when it leads to changes in your life. It sounds to us like you are ready to bring some of those changes to reality. Are we right?

In The Past Year

The people I hurt is my family and my baby's mama a lot throughout these years. By me being outside and running the streets, my mom and family was hurt because they knew what could happen to me and I just keep putting myself in danger. Then when I got locked up, that hurt my mom and BM the most. My mom was hurt because she was seeing me turn into my father and thought that I wouldn't amount to nothing. My BM was hurt by me a few times. I was seeing other girls and telling her hella lies. But as time went on, I stopped that bullshh 'cause I seen that she was sticking by my side no matter what. Then, by me being in here this long, it been affecting her.

But when it's all said and done, I cant change the past. I can only say I am sorry for the things I put my loved ones through! But now I feel I am more mature and smarter that I can make the right choices.

-Knowledge, San Francisco

From The Beat: What you've written tells us that you are moving from self-centered childhood into more responsible adulthood. You are thinking of others, and how your actions affect them. Saying you're sorry for the harm you've caused others (and yourself) is no small thing, especially if it signals a change in your future so that you will give these people (and yourself) good reasons to be proud of you.

Sentenced

On October 29th, I got sentenced. They gave me 120 days and four months. It sucks, but it's ok. My charge would have giving me four years, and if I was tried as an adult, I would have had a strike.

I'm 18 now, but I'm glad I was 17 when I did my crime. I'm never going to do anything like that again. This is my first and my last time in here. I learned my lesson. But I wish I was out already.

-Nacho, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You're wise to see that things could have gone much worse for you. You're even wiser to connect the dots, and realize that you hold the power to determine your own future. Don't disappoint yourself.

In The Past Years

In the past years I've done a lot that's wrong. I've hurt some people including my mother, my friends and some people around me. I would like to apologize to everyone I may have hurt.

The person I feel I hurt the most is my mother. Every time I get locked up, every time I argue with her, and every time I had her come pick me up from the police station, I can tell she feels a lot of pain. Mom, I'm sorry for the times I've yelled at you. I'm sorry for making you shed tears.

It hurts me every time I see her cry, and I've certainly learned my lesson. I don't ever want to come back here, even though I don't belong in here. I'm sorry. Please for give me.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your heartfelt apology — not just to your mother, but to "everyone I may have hurt" — is a measure of your own maturity and sense of responsibility. Your conscience is bothering you for treating the person you owe the most respect with so little respect. Now is the time to make good on your regrets by not giving your mom any more reasons to shed tears on your behalf.

Seen The Light

Hey Beat, I'm writing this during Activity since I'm hella bored. I want to Tell you about an experience I had one Day, about a year and a half ago. I had Only been locked up for a few plus months. It was about four in the morning and I was asleep in My single cell not having any dreams. I Felt a presence in the room and I quickly Woke up, sat up immediately alert. The room Was filled with a brilliant white light, but It didn't hurt my eyes. It was so bright That I could see only about a foot and a half In front of me, anything past that simple surrendered To whiteness. I couldn't even see the ends of my Arms, or the bed I sat on. Then, out of that Brightness came a hand, fare finger outstretched. It was pointing at me. It touched my chest And my eyes snapped shut, my body was Shaking like crazy; my heart was racing Very fast. It was all beyond my control, I couldn't stop. Eventually though I did stop Shaking and my eyes opened again, and I sat There thinking "woah! That was cool." Then I Should start going to church, and I did.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow what a incredible experience! What do you think that bright light represented? Why did you start going to church?

Thanks To The Beat

Well Beat, I'm getting out
Tomorrow and I'm feeling pretty
Good! I came into juvenile hall
All tough guy and thought of life
As a big toilet bowl where
People just pooped all over me.
I hated life and hated expressing
Myself until I met Margo and
Dennis. Margo really introduced
Me to a world of happiness and
Pain free state of mind. Every time
The Beat came I knew my worries
And pain would be erased as
Soon as my pencil touched the
Paper. Writing to me is my
Life and I love expressing how
I feel or what I've been through.
I think a lot of people need
"Somebody" to speak for their
feelings and I always thought
Of myself as their voice. I mean
Every one wants to be "Somebody's",
Someone! I wanted to be
That someone for others, and
The Beat helped me lift my
Voice and be the voice for others.

Dennis is really cool and he has
Made my J-hall experience
Go by fast and friendly. The
Beat helped me realize life
Is what I make it, not
What my mind makes of
It. I really thank you Beat
For always being here for
Me and I hope to keep
Writing for you anytime.
You've really opened my eyes
And helped me forgive certain
People in my life. And don't
Worry I left "a little
Wiggle room" for forgiveness!
I'm going to do good and I
Thank all those who stood
By me: Ms. Yoder, Beltran
And of course all of the G2
Girls. Keep your head up
Gotta go but Thanks
Beat.

-Lady Joker, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We have enjoyed your pieces very much, and we know that your writing is looked for by young folks in other facilities. When you speak strongly and eloquently, as you do, people listen. We're sure that Margo and Dennis will be happy to know that you appreciate their efforts and intentions. We wish you great good luck. Work hard and be good.

God, Why?

In the past years I committed a lot of crimes.
In the past few years I did a lot of time.
In the past few years, I told a lot of lies
Most of all, I'm glad I didn't die.

In the past few years a lot of things happened.
A lot of my friends died and the only question I could ask is,
"God, why?"

-The Money Boy, Alameda

From The Beat: We wish we had an answer for you - but all we can say is the beauty and eloquence of how you asked the question makes this a piece that goes right to the reader's heart. You need a new name, because the truth you speak here is far more valuable than Money.

O-T Today

Today I had an O-T. I get O-T's to go see my therapist. I decided to call and actually talk to my boyfriend, since I was out. I just wanted to know how he has been. The last time I talked to him was three months ago - the day I got locked up.

I'm in jail for hitting him and leaving him unconscious. I'm facing a strike now, and not yet sentenced, but I got court October 30, so hopefully something happens. Anyway I talked to my boyfriend that I wasn't going to talk to him anymore and he started crying.

I found out that he almost died doing crack. Lots of people are looking for him and his older brother got killed. I feel so bad.

Now I won't be able to sleep unless I cry myself to sleep.

He says he does drugs and drinks to get through the day. I wish I could be with him to make him feel better. I honestly think that the strong love I had for him is gone. I love him but just not like that. I care for him. We both been through a lot together and I been there for him in all of those times, at least when he wanted me to be there, and I know he needs somebody to listen to him, hold him and wipe off his tears.

I'm frustrated and I feel so down.

I wrote my judge a letter, so hopefully she takes my behavior and letter into consideration and just gives me a chance out there. Hopefully I'll get out, or get much less time then I think.

-Confused and Frustrated, Santa Clara
From The Beat: We can see why you are confused and frustrated. Love is a complicated emotion, and there are many ways to love people. Your friend needs help. He's gone through hell and needs a hand to get himself out. Can you think of anyone who might be able to get to him with some help? We know that the help is out there. Is he ready to receive it? We're concerned about you, and after reading your piece, we're also concerned about your friend. Please talk with us when we see you next.

My Life

As my life been going
Year by year through trouble marks
I was taught to never fear.

Leaving my life has been so unbalanced
Being in trouble to doing good
But I'm compound living in the 'hood.

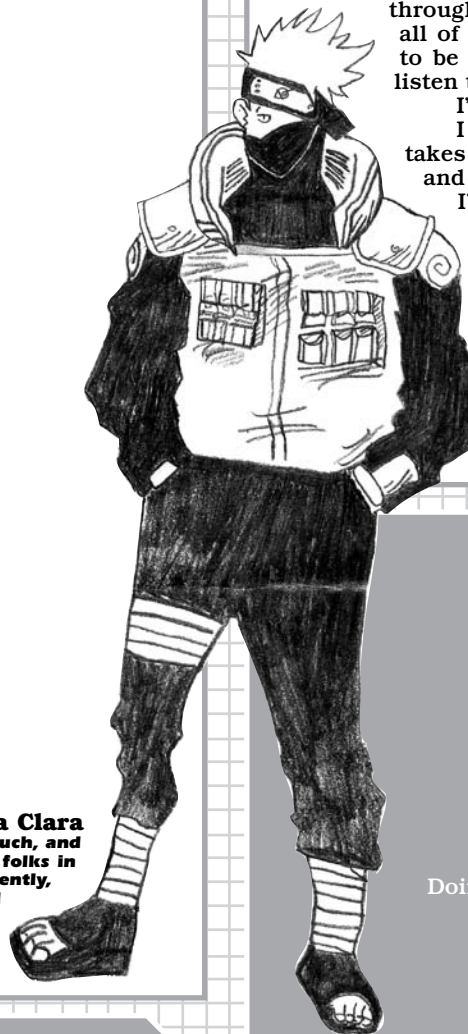
As I sit here and think of my life plans
Remembering people say
I ain't gonna be nothing

Doing seven and a half months on becoming a
changed man
I ask the Lord above
He says put it in His hand

My life, my life, my life
There's a lot going on
Being with the Lord has kept me strong
Through trouble times
Knowing life is tough
My life is good
So there's no reason to rush
My life!

-Jay Pitt, San Francisco

From The Beat: We really love the ending of this poem because it is advice that everyone could benefit from listening to. You're right, there's no reason to rush your life. Let it unfold and develop and change as you make adjustments from the lessons you learn from experience. Let the strength you've built from going through the difficulties you've had to endure be the foundation for a brighter future in freedom.



You Are In My Dream

The last time I saw you, it was in my dream
 A place to live, a baby, and a wedding ring
 The only time I see you is at night in my sleep
 My feelings in my heart run so strong, run so deep
 When I have a dream, you are always in it
 My dreams are the only thing I have; I love every single
 minute
 So as long as I'm here
 I only have one fear
 It's to stop dreaming of you
 Baby girl, you know who

-Sneaky, Marin

From The Beat: How sad that your dreams are more real, more wonderful, than your actual life right now. Where is this young lady now? Can you write her? Or is everything between you lost?

Always Lil' Capy

What's up, Beat? This is once again Lil' Capy. I'm writing about this town life. A lot of people don't go through the shhh we go through. Homies be hating on the town, but they just be hating on us town homies because we get more active than them. Ninjas from other cities be saying they're gangstas. How can they be gangstas when they live in a city that's not ghetto?

They be saying they be doing dirt, when in their cities there is no killings? How they going to be doing dirt when they don't be murders? All their shhh is bullshhh. Supposedly, dirt they do is breaking windows with BB guns. That shhh ain't dirt. Dirt is when you pull triggers, real triggers. Homies from other cities be putting on hella tattoos so they can look hard, when they don't even earn their shhh. They is all fake! They don't be doing shhh but running their mouths.

They don't got to walk around looking at every car that be passing. They don't live like us town homies.

Every day when I was in the outs, I'll wake up and walk up the street to my hood and think, "Is this my last day I'm gonna see?" Holding my pistol, always paranoid, thinking someone is going bust me. Always stressing about my dead homies, smoking weed, trying to release my stress, pulling triggers, thinking about my dead homies.

My homies is all I got. My 'hood family is all I care about, even more than my parents because if I really cared about my mom, I would stop bangin', stop making my mom cry and stress because of what I'm doing out in the street. I care more about my 'hood family. I don't know what's wrong with me. All I know—that's how I feel about it. This 'hood shhh is all I got and all I care about. I'm just going to bang this shhh 'til the devil takes me away.

Every day I think about how will I be if I didn't live in Oakland? I probably wouldn't be thinking about getting killed. All I know, as I grew up, my life just got worse every day. This life is messed up, so I don't care about his life. I'm not here to stay.

RIP Dash, G-Money, Lil' Arturo, Goofy. I'm still mourning for y'all.

Free all in the hall.

-Lil' Capy, Alameda

From The Beat: Reread how this piece changes from beginning to end. Look at how eloquent and honest it is – and how powerful. You start out like you're almost proud of the violence and killing of your city because somehow that makes it more "real", but then what comes out is that the realiest thing about it is the pain. Being paranoid, having to lose yourself in a cloud of smoke just to dull the sorry, and then, the worst, where you start describing life as so messed up that you don't even care about it. But The Beat is here to tell you that your life matters. Your future matters, your pain matters. But it's not enough for us to believe in you, or have hope for you ... you have to have the belief and hope in inside your own heart. Is it there? You have important things to say to the world. The world needs you.

First Words, Last Statements

Why do we do the things that we do? Are we programmed to do them? Why do we see what we see? Or hear what we hear? Why? Is the question, what is my statement? What's out there for a young man who wants to make it, but evil lurks around the corner?

People tell me read the Bible for the Lord who is my savior. I think to myself how is that? Would God let the world kill each other after we've prayed for our fellow men? Would God abandon his kids like this? Would God let us starved to death and be poor? Would God let our neighborhoods be so dangerous at night when they are?

Why? What is the statement? What's God? What are you here on earth for? What made me come about to earth? Why am I here? What's my purpose on earth? Who do I care about and who cares for me? So abandoned, trapped in my own thoughts don't know what to think or do any more. I feel careless. Why? Where's the answer? What's the answer? What do I choose money or life? Why do I choose? What makes me choose?

What makes us say what we say when we say what we said? What makes us feel pain, confusion, desire, lust, love, deliverance, power? Where do those feelings come from? Why are they there? They hurt so much why do they hurt? I think to myself what would this world be like without, thieves, murders, rapist, liars, cheaters, dope fiends, crack, powder, guns, war. Would it be peaceful or miserable? I can't go any more.

Sometimes I laugh to keep from showin' how mad, confused and stressed out I am, no one even sees it. They just notice me laughin'. Ha. Tell you the truth I can't remember the last time I was truly happy. As I write I cry inside but out I'm smiling. Why am I smiling on the out but, cryin almost dying on the inside? I don't like the feeling.

When I was young I used to want to be a lawyer or a doctor. You know why? 'Cause they're helpful. I'm helpful. I like helping when I see an opportunity. I love caring for others when they need help as I grow, thoughts of being a lawyer a doctor gets removed quickly all I think about is robbing, sellin' and my next plan to eat or feed myself and family.

Why? Maybe because I was programmed to do it. I do it because I see others do it plus I needed to do it in order to not starve. Now robbing, selling and shhh is far from my mind. I have an opportunity. If I can't see the answer I'll find it. My choice is to live life to the fullest until I die, get money while I'm at it.

See what I see because I chose to. I hear what I hear cause I chose to does what I do simply because I'm programmed to do it. I write because I love to. I rap because I can express myself in ways I can't just talk about. I feel when I write. I hear when I write. I see when I write. The writings see me. It's a program that I came to know and love. My first statements my last words why did I write his? What's the meaning for it? Maybe for me to realize and see what I was thinking.

-Boe, Alameda

From The Beat: Maybe you're right! We hope you reevaluate everything you were thinking. Why did you write this? Why are you there? Why are we responding to your statement? Who knows? But why choose to come to jail when you can choose not to?

write because I love to. I rap because I can express myself in ways I can't just talk about.

It's Time

Get it in order
Get it in line
I'm gonna slow things down
Take one day at a time
My life's at risk
My time's running short
It's either step up my game
Or get kicked off the court
I've tried too hard
To throw it all down the drain
I'll soon find the sunshine
And look back on this rain
I get zoned out
When I sit and I wonder
Why'd I get struck
By this lightening and thunder
Another bad decision
Another wrong choice
I focused and listened
But I heard the wrong voice
I can't do nothin' now
It is what it is
But it's time to stop playin'
'Cause tricks are for kids

-Young J, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, these rhymes are so great. Tricks are for kids, and this piece shows that you are clearly becoming a man. We're ready for your Part 2/Where you tell us how you made your dreams come true!



Who Is Lil' Marcus?

Well, I'm just a regular person from Oakland. That's where I was raised. Born at Highland Hospital April 16, '92. I am one of the youngest ninjas in my squad. If you wondering who that is, it's my mijo patnas—that's who I be with—mostly every day from morning to night. We be hanging out down, deep in the 'hood..

If you ever been to my hood, you'll always see one black person and a bunch of Mexicans. Usually I be with my potna, Rodolfo, from (our streets.) Or Esteban, Jesus, and Saul. We usually be riding on bikes or in cars. I do stuff normal teenagers do—like go to the movies with girls and sometimes play video games. That's only if I'm bored or I am under the influence.

Another thing about me is that I used to go to Cole Middle School, right by the projects. That's where I first met my patnas that I listed. There was a couple of times that I really did go to school.

Some people think that just because I am in Camp Sweeny that I am a bad person. I used to go to school and get good grades, but the more people misjudge me, the more I keep making them proud and know that they are telling the truth about me.

I plan to change my life when I get out of camp. I'm tired of coming in and out of the hall. I'm tired of having to listen to people. I feel like a slave, because I have to follow too many orders. But it's okay—that's what's making me not want to come here any more.

So, for all you new people in the hall, or if you keep coming back, just stay out, go to school, listen to your parents or guardian, and stay away from violence.

-Lil' Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: Here's the tough part - you love your friends, you have positive things you do with them, but you're still in the thick of it, and so trouble will be looking for you. Boredom, being under the influence, those are the two things that get you in trouble. So do you have a plan? Are you going to still drink or do drugs? If you do, do you think things could turn sour again? And what can you do to escape the boredom?

The Pressure

There's pressure on us everywhere we look. During our lives there's someone who is going to pressure us to do things we don't want to do.

One particular incident that I remember is the first time I smoked weed. It had to be about 11 years ago. Most of my friends were doing it at the time. I had already been fighting their pleas for a few years. Then one night as they were all smoking up they once again asked me if I wanted to smoke, expecting me to say no - like always - but they were shocked when I stuck out my hand and asked for a hit. I assume, like the first time for everyone, I started to choke on the smoke. I took a few more hits and called it a day.

The crazy thing is that when I took my first hit, my boys started to celebrating like I scored a winning game, or the winning touchdown in the playoffs or something.

I think sometimes we give into pressure because we want to fit in. The sad part is that I didn't even get high. It had no affect on me whatsoever. So to fit in, I had to pretend like I was high and laugh like a fool along with the rest of them.

To end this story, I eventually tried it two more times to make sure that it wasn't for me. Now, I don't knock people's beliefs or thoughts if it's not in me, as long as you're grown. But after that, I never let them pressure me about those types of things again and they respected that.

- Rantings of a Lunatic, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, we sure wish we could have been there to witness you acting a fool. It's like that old Adam Sandler skit from his comedy album "They're All Going to Laugh At You," about the kid who pretends to be high on everything. But that might have been before your time, youngster. Either way, it's a good lesson to know not that people will still respect you if you say no, no matter how much they pressure you.

My Haunting Memory

There are a couple memories burned in my mind that haunt me 'till this very moment. About two years ago my dad and I flew to Poland for two weeks to visit my family and because my grandmother had cancer and her time to live was limited.

My grandmother was like my mom to me. She took care of me when I was little and she's been always my role model. She was a healthy good woman. But when I came from the airport to my grandparents' home, when I arrived in Poland, my grandmother was laying down with barely any energy. She lost so much weight and that was unlike her. I hardly recognized her but I sat down next to her and acted like everything was normal.

As days went by on my visit in Poland, my grandmother started having trouble walking and was getting worse, but I was in denial, I couldn't even imagine burying her. So sometimes during the day I would go chill with my friends instead of being with my grandma.

Then four days before I was suppose to fly back my aunt wanted me to visit her but she was a couple hours drive away, but I felt I had to go see her. So I told my grandmother I loved her and that I'll see her the next day. She was lying down and I had hugged her and I gave her a kiss, and I left.

The next day I came back and my grandpa told me, crying, that my grandma passed away in the hospital. I felt like the whole world was ending. The person that I loved the most had left me and my family. I felt so weak and with no hope. I learned though that crying won't help and that even though I can't see her physically, I know she's still right here next to me all the time.

My grandma, Aniele is my guardian angel. I have her name tatted on my right arm 'cause I believe she's with me, helping me with life. The memory of seeing her alive for the last time still haunts me. I still see her alive looking at me. I miss everything about her and the warm hugs, but one day I will be reunited with her. 'Till then, I'll make you proud grandma. I love you and miss you.

-Rosita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you. This is a lovely story, even though it's sad. You are very lucky that you got to see her before she died. We're pretty sure that as time passes, you won't feel haunted by this story, but fortunate to have been there at that time.

In The Past

In the past I've caused a lot of people pain, people I know and don't know. The people I know I've hurt is my mom and brothers. I hurt them because I can't stay out of jail. Even when I'm out, they stress, because I be runnin' the streets all day and night. Moms be callin' my phones, sayin', "It's 2:00 in the morning—come home." I say, "Okay," but take my time. So when I come home, released from camp this month or next month, I plan to make it right.

The people I hurt that I don't know is the people I robbed, in person, a house, carjacked, or any quick come up. I robbed that person so I can do what I do, and on the other hand, the person I robbed is at home, hella mad or in tears, because I took what they worked hard for.

-Lonnie, Alameda

From The Beat: It takes a lot of strength to look your own past in the face the way you did just here, and it shows how much goodness is under all the bad things you did before. So now it's time for your second chance... how are you going to "come up" in a way that's legit and doesn't cause pain to you, your loved ones, innocent strangers? Because you still deserve a come up - you deserve a good life.

In The Past Year

The people I cause pain to was my mom, my victim's family, and me. I cause pain to my mom 'cause now she gots to call in sick whenever I got court and that affects her a lot. She almost got fired 'cause of me. I felt guilty 'cause of that. It also effects my mom 'cause I'm her baby boy, and I know it hurts her when she comes to visit me.

I hurt my victim's family feeling, 'cause what me and my crime partners did to dude was messed up, and I know I hurt their feelings.

I caused pain to myself 'cause now I'm looking at four walls every night, following rules, and wearing other people's drawe's. I'm getting tired of that shhh. I've been here for six months going on my seventh, and it causes pain 'cause I'm not doing what I want to do, I got to follow rules and shhh. I also miss my family and homies.

That's the people who I cause pain in the past years.

-Miguel, San Francisco

From The Beat: There's a lot of sadness in this acknowledgement of the pain you've caused, especially to your mother who deserves so much better from you. But since you clearly see how your actions have affected so many other people negatively (but mostly yourself), when you imagine yourself home and free, what changes do you expect to make in order to make up for some of the pain you've caused?

I hurt my victim's family feeling, 'cause what me and my crime partners did to dude was messed up, and I know I hurt their feelings.

Trial

Man I went to trial yesterday, I was in that G-thang from 9:00 am to 4:30pm, my back was hurtin', I was nervous and I was getting, mad as a mutha. Six police officers testified against me and one bad thing is they all told the same ass lie on me. I am charged with six felonies and two misdemeanors.

The whole thing is that I really didn't do what I am being blamed for. The thing that made me mad is my "Patna" testified on my behalf, but he was acting like an asshole on the stand, making me look like a jerk because he wanted to lie instead of tell the truth.

By watching him on the stand really showed his true colors. It made me realize that he is a nobody to me and I don't know him anymore. He always used to ask me "Are you a snake at the end?" and I used to always say "Hell naw!"

But come to find out that he's the snake and he ain't the type of "Patna" he thought he was.

After sitting in court for about eight hours, like a job I have to go back tomorrow. I just hope for the best and prepare for the worst even though I am innocent. Who knows what might happen to me.

-Domo, Alameda

From The Beat: Who knows? We do. The trial worked out in your favor. So now you're back to square one, congratulations, we're so happy for you! And now, Domo - what next?

Stressing In The Hall

By me being in here put my mine to rest because I'm here and this ain't even you man. I mean you missin' hella shhh on the outs.

I'm hella desperate 'cause I miss family and friends, all that shhh and can't nobody help me through this by myself. I'm in here probably 'bout to get out soon, but if I don't then shhh "hey," I can't do nothing but just take the time. I ain't happy, but yeah it be like that sometimes. I can't do nothing but jus' wait 'till my time to go home!!! But for real jus' do yo' time so you could go home.

-Tanesha

From The Beat: We feel you! We wish you can just get out on your next court date. But don't stress off things you have no control of. While you locked down, do you program, you do you, and when your time comes focus on not coming back!

I Need To Get Out

I need to get up out this camp fast. This is my second program and I'm bein' coo' this time. It ain't coo' here. Ninjas be gettin' beat up in the bathroom by little ninjas. These ninjas up here be cotton soft. They talk, tryna make a big rep for themselves, but get caught up in situations they can't get out of. I'm not tryin' to get into none of that shhh. I'm gonna do my program and get out. I'm a do what I do.

-Sticky Boy

From The Beat: Here's a question for you... why is it an insult to say that someone is 'soft'. Is it better to have done more dirt, hurt more people, had less love? If so, why?

Nario

This Lil' Nario. You know who it is. I'm still at camp. I'm doing cool. I'm about to go home this weekend. I'm gon' do hella shhh, like go to the schoolhouse.

But just to let y'all know, when you get out of jail, be cool an stay out the way, because people ain't playin' right now. All my friends are dying, so just do you and get money and stay to yo'self. Don't forget to wipe me down, because I'm on—shoulders, chest, pants, shoes!

-Nario

From The Beat: We hope you also follow your advice, because you need to stay safe, and stay out of the line of fire. You have too much living ahead of you! To much good to experience!

I'd Be A Cheetah

If I could choose an animal that best describes me, it would be a cheetah. The reason is that I am quick and I could run for a while without getting tired. When I used to go to Marcus A. Foster, I used to beat everybody in 100-yard dashes--that when I found out I had that talent.

I could run really fast when 5-0 on me, or I am getting shot at. I coulda been running right now, but I turned myself in, so I could get this shhh over with.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: You would be a cheetah, that's awesome. And congratulations on turning yourself in - not because you're locked up but because it means that you'll be out soon, putting your talents to work!

*I coulda been running right now,
but I turned myself in, so I could
get this shhh over with.*

Doom

I get arrested and now I'm depressed
I'm in my room as my ends doom.
I slit my wrist as I bite my lip.
I turn my hate inward and fly off the handle.
I drip wax on myself with a candle.
Kill myself, now I'm in hell, my cell.
I'm inside a room living with eternal doom.

-Kyle

From The Beat: Your poetry stays dark - but your life has gotten brighter. Think about how worried you were when you thought you'd have a long sentence, but now it's turning out that you won't. What kinds of poems will you be writing as you get closer to freedom?

That What You Are

Special, that what you are
But you're so far
And all I can do, baby
Is think of you
All the time, every night
So, baby do you think
Do you care for me?
'Cause, girl, you know
Really care for me?
My heart cries out
Lonely when I can't be next to you
My hand gets to beatin'
When it can't feel you
My life is brightened
When I think of your pretty face
And I think, Damn,
When I think about
How I used to treat you
So, baby, am going make a change
And how I treat you
Because, special, that's what you are to me
My heart, that's what you are to me
So ladies, don't ever forget how special you are
Because, my lady didn't
And she show me how special she is
Because I'll give up crime
For my lady
So, basically, she saved me
'Cause I'm am, damn
Sho ain't comin' back
Now that's special

-Majia

From The Beat: Saved by love, it doesn't get any more beautiful than that! Congratulations on finding a woman you can trust ... and we love the way you take that love and use it as a way of reminding all women of what they deserve!

Feeling My Mom's Pain

In the past year I know I have caused a lot of pain to my mother because after all she has done for me and what she expects of me after all I've been through with her and my sisters. Man...I really cant believe I really just made her cry and now... she might not think of me at all and I don't understand how I came here and how mad she might be at me. All I can say is if I told any one what me and my mom and sisters have been through I don't think they, would help, and my mom don't need me no more.

-Jalisse

From The Beat: As much pain as you think you have caused your mom, we're sure that she still loves you. Your mom just wants you to be successful and she doesn't want to see you behind bars. You don't have to cause her more pain, but you can help relieve her pain by not coming back to jail and do good! Your family needs you!

Distant Love

Have you ever wanted something that someone tells you "no, you can't"?

That's the way I feel about this girl outside these four walls, which makes my thoughts pant like a dog. This girl, I have lots of love for, but the way that everybody acts makes my heart sore.

Her mom rejects me out of fear that I am soon to figure out but just the thought of loving her and never getting to see her makes me childish pout. Along with the unfairness of not loving the person I want, I have the thought that I will never have the chance of loving her and calling her mine.

We are divided by a great amount of water forcing our distance, but with an immeasurable amount of love within it.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Have you tried talking to her mom, to let her know that you have good intentions and great love for her daughter? Why do you think her mom is rejecting you?

Lion Is King, And So Am I

If I can choose an animal that best describes me, it is a lion. The reason I say a lion is because he is the king of the land. He roams, and that's basically how we live in the streets. Only the strong survive, and the lion is a symbol of all that by putting his smash down to become the King Of The Jungle.

-Li'l' Tb

From The Beat: If you could describe some other people on the streets or in your community as animals, what would they be? For the lions, what are the biggest challenges?

In The Past Years

I've caused a lot of pain for people in these last past years. I keep coming back to jail and leaving everyone who needs me. I'm not there for my mom and my little sister 'cause I'm always up in this bootsie-ass place.

It kills my mom to see me up in here all the time. I've been here thirteen times! I feel bad for hurting her like this, but I don't think before I act.

My girl Tina and me having some troubles right now and we're both causing each other pain. Even though she keeps on doing me scandalous, I'm gonna stay strong and stick by her side. I love this girl like crazy, real talk.

I'm gonna go to camp, pimp my program, and go back home to my mom, my sis, and my lady. My three special girls. I'm done putting them through pain. Stay Up Beat!

-Buh Buh

From The Beat: It sounds like you really want to make a change. One thing you can do now, while you're doing your program, is to think about situations that often get you in trouble. How can you avoid them in the future? If you stay patient with your program and with your relationships, you can really turn things around and put this phase behind you.

Chameleon

The animal I think best describes me would have to be the chameleon. The reason I would say that is because of my ability to adjust to any environment. If I'm in a quiet environment, I can change to a quiet person. If I'm in a fast-paced environment, I become a fast-moving person. I think these qualities are essential to me surviving in the streets.

-Kwamaine

From The Beat: Are there ever times where it's not good to be a chameleon?

In The Past Years Of My Life

The years that are in my past... well, I have a lot to say. Here it goes. I used to stay in Union City and I got blamed for a lot of things like throwing rocks and vandalism. Most of the time, I wouldn't get caught, but there was this one time that I got caught and they finger-printed me. I was really scared because I thought that I was going to juvenile hall. But I wasn't scared anymore once they told me that I wasn't going to jail. I started talking hella shhh to the police officers and they couldn't do anything to me. My mama was right outside waiting for me.

I used to have a lot of good times in Union City. Another thing was, I always used to get suspended from school. One time, I got kicked out of school for looking into a classroom for my friend during break. I got kicked out for seven days straight. My mama came up to the school and flashed on the principal because my mama didn't like her and I didn't like her, so it went both ways. So, that is that.

I used to have a best friend named Brain and we used to do a lot of things like shoot B-B guns and go camping and ride dirt bikes, fix them and a whole lot of other things that I can't talk about.

-Denk

From The Beat: It sounds like you have happy memories, but these experiences also led up to your arrest and detention in juvenile hall. Do you plan to change your ways when you get out? What was your mom's reaction to you getting locked up?

The Beast In Me

This yo' boy Ec, what's up, Beat?

An animal that best describes me is probably a cheetah. I got wheels, man. Cheetahs are the fastest land animals and in most situations I'm the fastest around. Whether it's playing football or running from five-oh, I get loose. Cheetahs could only run their fastest for a quick minute because they ain't got stamina. I can run my fastest for a min, but I smoke too much trees, so I ain't got no lungs. Cheetahs hunt by themselves and live in groups. I stay with my potnas, but if and when it comes down to it, I get active by my lonesome. A cheetah is a beast and -ask about yo' boy- 'cause I get down. Straight beast, real life animal.

-Ec

From The Beat: Cool! Cheetahs are amazing creatures, and as for you, start taking care of yourself, quick the smoking and do what you can to get straight so you do not have to run from the police, 'cause the beast is locked up in a cage!

California Bear

I feel desperate right now. I want to get out the hall so I can hit up parties and kick it with my family. In the past year, I have hurt my mom because I have been locked up three times and she suffers every time I come in here. I don't give in to peer pressure.

The animal that best describes me is a bear because I'm a savage California bear. Because I'm one of the nicest people you can ever meet, but if you mess up and get on my bad side, it's bad. You just started a war. I don't have no love for you, so anything goes.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You are telling us a lot about what's going on with you in your short piece. We hope that you get out and are reunited with your family and friends soon. If peer pressure doesn't get you into trouble, then what does? What can you do differently on the outs to keep from coming back? How can you find a way or a place to live in peace, like a bear does? The bear is a powerful image. Remember it!

Staring Walls

This cell is driving me crazy
The walls keep winking their eyes at me
constantly staring
telling me their white lies

I try to put them out of mind by closing my eyes
talking to myself until I feel the slightest bit of tiredness
smelling urine, shhh and throw-up.

I miss being at home with my room a mess
throwing my clothes in the hamper
or kicking my dog off my bed
turning off my lights

with the feeling of safeness and home comfort.

All that is taken from you as soon as you look out the
window of the cop car and see the building that you
will be serving a chapter of your life in that you'll never
forget.

So as soon as I write this,
I feel a relief of not talking to myself or the asshole walls
that don't stop staring
trapping you like a mouse in a shoe box
scratching at the walls, pissing and shhh-ing in the
same spot.

When I get out
I will make sure to be the best of the best
on behavior that is

-Anthony

From The Beat: Your poetic instincts perfectly capture the difference between a typical youngster's bedroom on the outs and the cold reality of life in a cell. Walls can provide us with comfort and safety, or seem like a taunting enemy. What are the "white lies" that the juvenile hall walls tell you, or tell other kids? We would like to hear a poem from the perspective of these walls that have seen so much.

No Way Out

I struggled a lot growing up. It was so rough, so tough,
being a Mexican child living this crazy life in this crazy
world. You have to do or die, gotta live to die, sometimes
you make it, and you smile for awhile. But sometimes
death meets you more than half way and your loved ones
cry for the things you have done. That's the gangsta life,
you have to represent your life, once you are in, there is
no way out.

-Smiley

From The Beat: That's a cop-out Smiley! Many people do get out though, and not through death. What would your loved ones do if they lost you to the streets? Isn't there another way? Use that head of yours!

In The Hood

In the hood is where people gang bang and sell drugs. In
the hood is where people get shot and die. In my hood,
I'm trying to stop the killing and the gang banging and the
violence and I'm trying to bring peace to the world and
put violence to a end.

-Patricke

From The Beat: This is a great goal. What are your methods?

Hyena

I would consider myself a hyena
because they come and steal food.

I ain't never cared,
I ain't never scared.

I'll eat yo' food with a full stomach,
I aint never shared.

-Butta

From The Beat: What do you think it is about the hyena's environment that leaves them always wanting more?

Wolf

If I could be any animal, I would be a wolf, because that is
my favorite animal. Another reason is because it is a
cool animal, it kicks it with a pack or alone, "The Lone
Wolf". I would say I'm kind of a lone wolf. I like to be with
others, but being alone is more of my thing.

-Sa

From The Beat: Thanks. What is it about being alone that you like?

Writers Choice

In the night I hear "pop pop" and "boom boom" but all
it is, is a sprinkle and bullet of doom. This is dedicated
to my brother.

People try to put me down

but I bounce back like a bendable spring and don't
listen to those things.

People waste their lives while others strive to try to be
better.

Some are worse than New Orleans weather.

Faking fun with a gun, it may be protection.

But still, if you could use your fist then you're going in
the right direction.

Bullets scar souls with dark holes, getting mo' than yo'
car stole.

Some hearts is blacker than charcoal.

And just the anticipation of incarceration...

-Young Voice In Juvenile Hall

From The Beat: We want to read the rest! Keep writing and we'll look for the rest of your piece in future issues.

I'm Tired

I'm tired of going to sleep and getting only a little bit of
sleep. I'm tired on the beds here in the hall I'm tired of
not getting phone calls home, I'm tired of eating the food
in here, I'm of wearing the same pants for a whole week.
I'm tired of being here locked up for a month.

-James

From The Beat: Don't you just get tired of being tired? If you tired of all this mess, we hope that when you get out you remember the nasty food, wearing your pants for a whole week, and phone calls. That way you don't come back!

Like A Pit Bull I Am A Beast

The animal that best describes me is a pit bull.

For starters, like me, a pit bull is a beast.

And on any ninja a pit bull will feast.

Like me once it starts there is no cease.

A pit is powerful and has speed like Muhammad Ali.

So the pit is an animal just like me.

From red nose to blue nose like a pit bull I will never
freeze.

But unlike a pit when it's time for a picture I will say
cheese.

Unlike a pit as a young teen I am just at my peek.

And in this juvenile hall it really reeks.

And when I get out then the rest of my life I shall seek.

But like a pit bull I will never be beat.

If I do then I certainly will not take my seat.

'Cause like a pit my head is solid as a rock,
like puppy pit's all the girls are on my jock

like a pit bull if you make me mad you will get socked.

Like a pit or not I will not be mocked.

-Richard

From The Beat: Pit bull's are beasts. But a pitbull's head is not as solid as a rock. You need to check the facts homie. And pit bull can be beat! Nice poem on the animal topic!!

Being Pressured

I remember about a couple of years ago I was driving down the street with some homeboys and we saw this person I went to school with that knew my family.

One of the homies told me to rush him, and I asked why. They told me that he tried to get at the homie's little sister. I was the B-G in the car, that's why they told me to, they wanted me to prove my heart to them. I didn't want to do it but I did it any way. I was pressured into it.

I got out of the car and I rushed him. We were boxing for a few seconds when gang task pulled up around the corner and blurred us. The homies cut out in the car and the cops took me and booked me into the police department.

That night I got yelled at by my mom and I had a restraining order to stay away from him at all times. This is one time where I got pressured.

-Convict

From The Beat: That's kind of messed up how the "Big homies" left you to get caught up like that. Real homies don't leave homies. We hope now that you're older you don't get pressured by any negative influences.

Being Pressured

I was being pressured when my homeboys told me to do something I did feel like doing, but at the same time I did want two go out like no sucker so I did and that was the first time I did some coco. I did feel good, but at the same time I was feeling like I was going to die. After that first time I did want to do it again and again.

-Casper

From The Beat: Everybody has experienced all kinds of pressure from friends, family, co-workers, etc. You name it. Sometimes it's hard and the pressure gets to you. But when it comes to drugs, that's something you shouldn't keep doing and doing just because your friends may think it's cool. If you're addicted go get some help.

Temper Problem

In the past year I think that I've been doing good however people mark me down as a violent person which I'm not but they do and I'm not,

I've been playing football and stuff, plus keeping my grades up. I think that it's just my temper and how fast I get mad at people, but my main thing is to quit worrying about what they thinking, and what they doin' and keep moving toward playing football and stuff and maintain my grades and make sure they high enough for me to play football and participate.

-Rooney

From The Beat: You right sometimes people might mistake you for something you're not. Just keep your temper in check and keep doing your thang. Keep those grades up and play football and forget about what other people say. You see the problem, now work on it!

In The Past Years

The person that I have cause the most pain to is my mom, dad, and sisters. The reason I caused my mom the most pain is because I am in jail and I have not been doing what she's been telling me. The reason I've caused my dad so much pain is because he is "in" pain and I've caused him more pain. The reason I've hurt my sisters is because I'm not home to protect them when something goes wrong, that is what I have done in the last year.

-Mainee

From The Beat: What's done is done. You are already in jail no need to keep thinking about all the pain that you caused in the past. Worry about the future. When you get out stay out. So you won't cause your mom and dad any pain, and you can be home to protect your sisters.

Waiting

What's up Beat! I am still here waiting to get out. Man, I am hella mad because I am still here and because I could've been with my family spending time with them and I could've been with my niece taking her to go trick-or-treating but I am still here locked up waiting to come out.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: You can go on and on about what you could've been doing. You could've not been doing what you did to get in here in the first place. Then you wouldn't have been writing about all the stuff you could have been doing. We hope you're out young friend and on the road to better living.

Man!

I'm in juvenile hall now

I made a stupid choice that I shouldn't have made.

I got one chance to fix it and if I don't I will serve a year and some months I'm trying to dis it and don't want to miss it

because I love my little brothers and my little sister plus my little niece and nephew

I made a stupid choice that I shouldn't have made I need to mess with my own crowd and my own age that would keep me from getting in trouble

I need to respect my mom and her rules that will help me to respect myself

I need to stop the gang violence that I'm in. I'm rapping from the heart and not the dark this ain't no place to be

man, I don't even got my head on track

-Baby Joker

From The Beat: You say you "rapping from the heart and not the dark." What do you mean by that? We cut the last part of your piece because of what you wrote on, regarding that b-s violence that has scarred way too many youngsters. You need to step up and teach, not hate on others!!

The Eagle Has Not Landed

The animal I say that most describes me is an eagle because I have good sight and because I like to stay high. I hate when I'm not flying high because I get bored.

-Whispers

From The Beat: Why else do you think an animal like an eagle represents you best? Are you sharp? Do you stand for something like the eagle does?

In The Past Year

In the past year I been doing too much I been smoking weed, cigs and drinking

In the past year I've been in gangs messing with guns and robbing people

In the past year I've been stealing cars car jacking and burglarizing people houses

In the past year I've been in the hall twice I've been skipping school and smoking weed

but when I get out to my group home

I'm going to stay and do my programs for I can get this sugar honey ice tea over with and get home with my family I've bean here for like three months and I can't take this sugar honey ice tea peace.

-Baby Joker

From The Beat: You've done a lot of stuff this past year. Have you done any thinking "in this past year" about your life? Doing the shhh you were doing ain't gon' bring you to no group homes in the near future! Guns, robbing, carjacking, burglarizing, you looking at like 10 years in the pen young homie at least! Wake up and utilize your potential!

A Bad Year To Say The Least

In the past year of my life I have did many bad things to the community and others and mom.

I have caused a lot of trouble to my community because of thing I been getting' into causing the schools to be on lock down and the police to be looking for me.

Next I could talk about the trouble and pain I have cause my mom to worry about me and to sent me back and fourth in juvenile hall.

Another thing in the past year that caused a lot of trouble is the fight robberies and other crimes that I been involved with.

-Lil' Dre

From The Beat: Well youngsta do you like getting in trouble? Do you like doing bad things to others in your community? Do you like causing pain for your mom? What's up man? You need to realize what you wanna do in life? You wanna be a part of the problem or the solution it's all on you. But if you continue to go the way you going then you gone end up in the Pen, or in the mortuary.

Dog

The animal that best describes me is a dog. Because I like fighting others I'm not scared of nothing. I'm like a street dog I do what ever I want.

In the past year. I hurt my mom because I was in and out of jail three times in one year. And now I'm tired of coming back hopefully this is my last time.

-Rodolfo

From The Beat: Yeah we hope it's your last time in here too. But you can't honestly expect not to come back if you don't change your ways. You can't be a street dog forever. You can't keep getting into fights and not expect to not get hurt or come back to jail. Hopefully you get your act straight so you won't cause yo' mama more pain.

Two Brothers Locked Up

Here it is, another week passed. Bad news came to me, talking about my brother is in here. Man I'm only a few weeks away of being out of here, then I have my lil' bra in here now. Man stress loves to enter my family's life.

I think it's traumatizing to me, every time I get something going on with me, or my family. I'm good now but my family is down, 'cause now two brothers are locked up, and a mother's home sad with her baby son, sayin' "It's gon' be alright baby!!!"

I'm proud of my baby brother, he goes to Asen, get good grades, and always listen to my mom. Everyone goes through things. I think once we're told and showed so much of an amount of things, we teach ourselves how to do the rest.

I want me and my lil' bra to get out of here and listen more to what my mother tells us. Me, I do have my mind focused on getting out, and going to school to get my education. Then get in real estate.

My plain is to show my brothers that you can make it and be something in live. It's never too late for anything. And moms will be proud of you if you do better, so keep yo' head up lil' Quill. Things might cross your path to make you mad again, but if you brush them off your shoulder, and be strong, you'll be alright.

A family that prays together staves together. Just do right and pray every night, for better days and to change your ways.

-Relly Bo

From The Beat: This piece is full of heart. You and your family have the love it takes to move out of this dark time, but be sure that when you are making your plans, be practical. Hook up with the Mentoring Center. Get online and find out about colleges and scholarships. Do everything you can to stack up the positives, go home early at night so you're home safe when the drama happens. And mostly, remember how you felt on the day you wrote this, because it was written by the Real You. Peace.

Cheetah Boy

If I could choose an animal that best describes me it would be a cheetah because I'm fast at running. So that animal best describes me.

-Desmond

From The Beat: Is that the only thing you have in common with the cheetah? Can you relate to any other animals that run fast?

A Tough Halloween

What's up Beat. Today I'm going to write about Halloween. Tomorrow is Halloween, and I'm locked up. I remember when I was a little kid and I dressed up as Freddy Krouger. I was trick or treating with my cousin and her friend.

We went to Fremont and I was walking and a group of older kids snatched my bag of candy. I was only six or seven so I yelled at them, but they pushed me to the ground and they laughed at me. I started to cry, but later that night my auntie gave me a lot of candy and soda and it turned out to be a good Halloween,

-Convict

From The Beat: Damn that's shady! Stealing candy from a lil' kid! At least they didn't ruin your night.

That Animal (Snake)

When you hear about me, most people say Nitty ain't cool or Frank ain't cool -- he a snake, and I know I am. That's me, a snake. That's how I get down. A snake sits and wait then loves his victim and then kill, strangle, destroy.

-Frank

From The Beat: One thing also about a snake is that snakes are cold-blooded. By that we don't mean cold blooded killer, we mean that literally, they can't regulate their own body temperature. Humans can survive heat and cold, just like dogs and lions and other warm-blooded creatures. But snakes are stuck in one environment because they can't adapt. We don't want to see you stuck that way, stuck where the only environment you can handle is jail -- or the misery and fear you face on the outs. You can change where you are, because you're warm blooded.

What Would You Do?

It's rage in my heart,

And this ninja acting hard,

Do I torn around and walk or do I let my gun spark,
If I don't deal with him now I might be labeled as a mark,
But if I take his life now it'll just raise the murder chart,

He already said he don't fight no more and if he get to
that danger my life I wont have no more, it's witness all
Around so if I kill him I'm goin down,

But if I let this ninja live then fo' sure I lose any crown,
This is how it is everyday in the town,

Everybody wanna go dumb,

Everybody and they mama wanna prove they get down,
Being a killer is easy but getting an education is what's
really hard,

Who ever will shoot but won't fight to me is a straight
mark,

How can you be a sucka just because you show that you
are smart,

I'm convinced that I'm gonna make it to the highly
educated chart,

I changed my life around but you best believe I still got
heart.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We see the heart here. And the brains too./And the streets as you see them are a catch 22/Damned if you don't, damned if you do/to get out it will take all the strength inside you/But don't do it alone/Find a new crew/The kind who will support/that strength inside you.

In The Long Run

Man this system is screwed up. Every two weeks they taking money out of my Mama's checks. It's almost two or three hundred dollars for restitution and she don't even be doing dirt, but she got to pay for what I've done.

I wish there was a way for her to stop all of that spending money, but it is helping me get out and when I do get out I'm gonna be off of probation.

I'm most likely to be tempted by so-called friends, they like they first like me, when they tell me to do something I got no choice. No. I got a choice, but then there's the stuff I want to do.

I do got a couple square ... They cool they just be hella funny- they don't be talking, they just be laughing for no reason.

My Mom is cool, she is a workin' lady. My Dad he cool too - he works at the Ghirardelli Chocolate Factory in SF. All that is good, it's cool I'm going to try to graduate High School and College, so in the long run I can take care of my family.

-Lil' Kari

From The Beat: You have a good family, a good soul, good dreams and a good head on your shoulders. But like you say here, when you are with certain friends, you end up in these situations. Do you plan on being with them when you get out? Because it seems like you do better when you surround yourself with good people, no?

Being Pressured

One thing I was pressured to do is when I was eleven years old, I was pressured to smoke weed.

And now ever since twelve I've been smoking heavily. My cousins pressured me to do this but on the hopes that, wouldn't like it and would never try it again but they were wrong.

- Lil' Turk

From The Beat: One thing you don't say in this piece is whether or not you feel like smoking weed has made your life difficult. Now that you're older you can look back and figure out whether it's something you want to keep doing or something you want to stop. What kind of impact has "smoking heavily" had on your happiness so far?

Stay By My Side

Baby Girl don't be making me feel right,
But when I mess wit' Lil' Momma

She be having Cal feel like irreplaceable and capable of
shhhh I ain't even tried.

Motivate me mentally and physically,

Could get me by,

Will she stay by my side?

Accelerate to the sky wit' me.

Bottles of Hennessy and Hypnotic

And other places she ought to be.

Ride wit' me to the top, similar closer where God should
be.

Family's gone bad, join my family where water be
Hyenas, Gorillas, Sharks and Piranhas, we out of here.

I fear no man but God.

Am I wrong for not fearin' him?

I'm serious believin' in Jesus dying on the cross for our
sins and other shhhh.

Rest in peace to my people with the Seagrams and
Hennessy.

-H-two-oh-Cal

From The Beat: This poem has that tension inside it that comes from moving back and forth between the god in you and the devil in you, the love in you and the hate in you, the dreams in you and the nightmares in you. Which is going to win? That is up to you.

Mysterious

Keep the faith come, for I can keep movin' on
Going ROP, doing twelve months strong

I gotta come home, leave the street alone
No glass windows, talking out of a phone

This world mysterious, a lot of strange things in it
Just like a game, trying hard really win it

A lot of obstacles, I got to over come
Trying to be smart, no more going dumb

This system like basketball, they pitch me a strike
Get two more, I going away for life

That mean, no more future, and more hope
It's a cold world, I got to wear a coat

The system got me twisted, just like a dream
Turn my light on, keep a bright future ahead

-Cameron

From The Beat: The system may have you twisted but you untwist yourself each time with your straight true lines. Your "coat" is something to protect your outside, but it comes from deep inside you. The coat is partly wit, talent, pride. What else is your coat made of?

Missin' Heart

Right now I'm in school, but not in class
And I'm bored just thinking about stuff that I can't
afford.

Memories running through my head and now I'm mad.
Also thinking about my past when I was happy.

My inner critic told me to not go to class,

It told me that a real girl has ass.

It told me to not care about my help.

I always hated when it said, don't be yourself be like
everyone else.

I listen to my critic and it led me to being wrapped up.
So don't listen to your negative side or your inner critic
because that is you!!

-Inner Critic

From The Beat: What's the opposite of your inner critic - would you call it your Inner Coach, your Inner Courage, your Inner Poet? What kinds of advice does it give you?

We'll Be Okay, Won't We?

The one thing that matters more to me than anything
else in the world is you and me. You are my world. You're
the one who gets all my love and my wishes and my
prayers. But somehow despite my best intentions, I never
feel quite safe enough or sure enough, to reassure that
I'll always be able to make you happy. I need to know.

I need you more than my words can say; I need to
always feel the warm peaceful feeling that I get when I
hold you. I

I need to experience the beauty of our love that I gentle
receive when we caress. I need for us to remember all
the love that's been given and all the love that will unfold
each day between the wonder of you and the warmth of
me.

And sometimes, I just want to know that we'll be
okay, won't we?

-Weezy

From The Beat: Who's the girl that this poem is dedicated to? What would it take to make things OK? Not just between you and her, but in your life altogether?

D-O-G

If I could be an animal I would be a dog. Because I'm just a dog because I like to bite into new thing and like I sort of bit into what I'm now.

-Lil' Nuk

From The Beat: Why else would you be a dog? Are you good at sniffing things out?

Hammered

What's good or bad, when you livin' the strange life
What's right or wrong, when you trying to survive

I don't know, I'm looking for some answers
Being in jail, my goals be hammered

I'm sitting my cell, lookin' at white walls
Four walls, and a window, how did my life fall

Room check, no privacy, staff reading my stuff
My life getting washed away, like a toilet flush

Can't tell me what to do, I make my own decision
Trying to yell at me, like I ain't got feelin's

I'm human, you human, that makes you no different
Scan and pepper spray, 'cause we they fearin'

Hands behind my back, Top Citizen I'm earnin'
Practicing lining up, ain't really learning

I'm thinking of a plan, to make things right
You got go through bad, to live the good life

-Cameron

From The Beat: Another amazing poem, Cameron. Once you tell us you have a plan, now you have to break down what the plan looks like. And also what are the five obstacles you will need to face down as you try to make that plan work for you. And what will you do when those obstacles hit? We realize this might not sound like much of a flow, but we'd still love to hear what you make of it!

The Past Year

In the past years I have mostly hurt my family. When I was in middle school I always used to get in trouble, like acting stupid in class, not doing what I'm supposed to be doing, not going to class sometimes and getting in fights and shhh like that.

I got in trouble so much I ended getting kicked out of school. The whole time I was really hurting my mom the most. She always had to miss work to go to my school meetings because I was always in trouble, it wasn't only because I made her miss work and she wouldn't get paid but because I wasn't doing what she wanted me to do because all she wanted was the best for me and for me to stay out of trouble. This happened all the way to high school and the same thing happen, I ended up getting kicked out.

Just until recently I've been doing real good. I've been going to school and I been looking for jobs trying to make my moms happy and then I end up here for something I didn't do. I can't wait until I get out and keep making my moms happy.

-Omar

From The Beat: You know, you're not only hurting your mom, but you're hurting yourself. Getting kicked out of school, hurts your education, not your moms. When you go to jail you're losing your freedom, your mom still got hers. But you are causing her pain 'cause she don't want you in jail. No mother wants see their child in jail. She just wants you to grow into a successful young man. What's the plan?

I Miss J-Money

Man, J-money I wish we knew each other on the outs. I know we will do hella shhh together in the outs as a lil' brother. But damn why you have to be in jail and why did we have to meet each other in this bullshhh jail?

Jail ain't for you J. You mean a lot to people. People show you hella love and care about you. I want to say you showed me love like a blood brother. I wish we was brothers, 'cause my family, they ain't cool, they don't care about me and don't treat me like you do. I love you ninja, I hope I see you in the out.. Tell you the truth, no one can't be like you J-money, he goes harder than anyone I know.

-P-Money

From The Beat: The Beat never knew Johnny on the outs, but he wrote about it a lot. He loved the fast life, and now regrets every second of it. When we knew him in here, there was no money, no car, no clothes but what the county gave him. But he had heart from the beginning, he was never afraid to show his true feelings. From the first day he showed up, he was up there reading his poems out loud, even though he was the newest kid in the unit. Not afraid of what people would think of him. He wrote about his heartbreak, his family, his hopes, his darkness, and even, despite the fact that the wall were coming down on him, his belief in himself. He was inspiring to other people. Hero is right.

A Tribute

J-money I really didn't know that young man, but he's cool. Shhh females he know and I know used to compare us together 'cause we Scorpios, and get money all the time. Man, I was fifteen on dubs, just like J-money, sixteen on 22's, man, seventeen on 24's, just like J-money.

I didn't know him on the outs, but shhh I've heard of him. It was a trip how I went to jail and seen him. I got to find out he was a cool person. I hope bra' keeps his head up like his. I know if I was out I'll be out 6's just as J-money would be.

I know it ain't a lot of writting 'cause I didn't know him that long. But if Young money, Cash money and J-money get to read this, bra you be easy.

In the past year I've been livin' the good life. I've got everythang I wanted, man a bad chick, a fat chain, a car on 4's, money in my pocket. Big stacks in rubber bands, man. Until I ended up in this place. But shhh, you know as soon as I get out I am gonna live that great life.

-Young Age

From The Beat: It's funny because Johnny was living that "good" life too, and then look what happened. He is, as you say, a great person. As for "great life" all he wants now is to be with his girl, and his family. The stuff he had before is what led him into this situation. What would be a truly "Great life" for you.

Past Years

In the past years I've been in and out of the system from group home to group home from the streets to the hall's and as the years go by I'm still on the same thing.

As I get older it seems like things are the same, over the years messing with the same broke ass females going to the streets from school house to school house from day to day wish in that one day will change.

Same county blues same county plates same judges hold grudges sending ninjas wit' out a care and goin' home thinkin' nothing of it. It's a new day, same dollars same staff getting' paid in my past years has just been more pain full 'cause I just choose to screw up my day, my dream, my life, and my legacy.

-This hurts

From The Beat: Everyday could be the same thang/ whether you hustle or gangbang/ but it's really all on you if you wanna see a change/ leave the past behind you/ and don't let blind you/ look into the future

Desperation

Desperate I'm desperate in getting out of here I'm getting impatient sittin' and waitin' for a deal or for the best thing to happen in my case. I been just getting tired of waitin' on what's going to happen to me and I'm getting desperate to know. I'm trying to do good and wait patiently but I'm getting irritated cause I been here over a year waitin' and fightin' my case.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Sounds like you have some serious charges if you been there a year and don't know what's going on with your case? You gotta have patience. We hope you don't get tired of doing good. Use your talents!

Desperation

When I hear the word desperation it makes me think about were am at right now. I get in a desperation mode when I think about my family, my girlfriend because I can't see them and it burns me up inside because I didn't do no type of crime to put myself in here or to put myself in this situation.

Some of y'all guys thinking, yeah right, but I know for sure and God know for sure I didn't do nothing and that's another reason why I get in my desperation mode and stay to myself because I gotta do time for something I didn't do and I can't do anything about it.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Sometimes life's real challenging. We might have to go through some real painful experiences, and desperate times, but it's how we handle all that strife, is what makes who we are in life. Don't give up hope. You ain't gonna be in there forever. Your family will still be there when you get out and hopefully your girl too!

I'm Desperate, Get Use To It

I'm desperate to get out of jail.
I'm desperate to never come to back to jail.
I'm desperate to turn my life around.

-Keith

From The Beat: Why do you say you're desperate to turn your life around? Don't be desperate, just do it, right now!

Trippin'

I'm sorry for inflicting pain on you
I know you go through your trials and tribulations
I still had to do what I had to do getting loaded and taking off of you
I was loaded at that time but I still got love for you
Took yo' money I knew it wasn't cool
Got stupid loaded with my ninjas actin' a fool
I already know you be breaking yo' back for me
I knew it was much more than love it was affinity
I know I broke your heart a couple times, never turned yo' back
You still stay behind I was on my grind tryin' get dough
Always had a different plan for me but I say no
What comes around goes around comes around
But hey I did what I did I hope you forgive me
When I get out we buffing a zip and a bottle.

-Keven

From The Beat: Whom are you talking about in this poem? What made you write this poem? You better stick by a person who never turns their back on you. As for the smoking and drinking upon getting out, well, you know the heavy consequences.

Another Day

Just another day getting chased by the boys,
In the bag bustin' bullets and getting chased
Just the same shhh everyday.
When I get out it's time to participate and go to school.
No more smoking and drinking, it'd time to be cool and learn my lesson.
I've only done three months and I'm in here stressing.
The shhh that I've been through is so depressing.
I've never been to jail. I seen two girls kissin'
Man being alive is such a blessing.

-Lil' Dauce

From The Beat: It's incredible the way you manage to find such a positive line to wrap up this poem. Even when you're in pain you end on an appreciation for life. That takes real heart.

All About My Daughter

What's up Beat, it's your homie Smokey from Hayward still behind these county walls. I thought I had seven more months to go but I still got eight to go.

I've been thinking a lot and watching a lot I realized that when I get out I have to had changed or else I'll go back to doing what I used to do I'll wind up dead or in jail. I got a daughter to think of and right now I'm being selfish by being locked up I love her she's my world so I gotta change if not for me but for her. Well I don't know what else to say I get so much on my mind I don't know what to write down or what I should.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Your absolutely right Smokey! We glad to hear that you're finally thinking. You already know what the outcome is when you lead a negative lifestyle. We don't have to repeat it you said it clearly. Do it for your daughter we know you don't want her to grow up without a dad.

Desperate Measures

Right now I'm desperate to know when I'm gettin' out of here. I know right now I'm payin' for everything that I've done in the past. I did one thing so bad when I dragged this old lady in downtown Oakland over ten dollars. It was the wrong that I dragged her 'cause she was hella old.

I remember I was kind of pressured to almost shoot somebody's house up, but I'm glad we didn't have the gun on us right then.

Also that night we got pulled over by the police and if we would've had to high-speed and been hot 'cause I was on a home pass.

-Cvg

From The Beat: It could be that the time in the Hall is a mixed blessing. Maybe you can sit back and think about how those things happened, especially because it sounds like deep down you're not the kind of person who wants to hurt people or do wrong. What brought out that side of you? What led you there?

Temporarily

I miss you a lot more than in the past
Days just go away, so so fast
I can't believe that I am here
Of being away from you and are not near
You may be a little crazy but you are my baby
We have had years together forever
Sometimes I be with the shit, but it always be legit
It's ok, cause we gone get this money but always remember
This shhh is only temporary.

-Arablan

From The Beat: Yeah, you definitely right about this only being temporary. But coming to jail back and forth, could become a nasty habit. Is that what you gonna be saying when you facing serious time? 'This shhh is only temporary.' We hope that when you talking 'bout getting money, you are gonna do it in a permanently legit way.

The Past Years

Back, a year ago I was angry, why? Just because of all the animosity I had toward people. I let my animosity build up and I let my anger I had, and I let it out on people and start doing thing. The community caused me problems and pain 'cause they snitched on me and I'm in here right now goin' through it.

-Marcus

From The Beat: How did the community cause you problems? What did the community do to you? Maybe the community didn't treat you right because you didn't treat it right? You said you was angry at everyone? It's kind of hard for anybody to show you any love when you hold so much animosity towards people.

In The Past Years....

I then caused a lot of pain towards my family. It wasn't meant to happen, but things do happen. They forgive me and they always gone stick by my side no matter what. I feel bad cause I then took my family thru a lot and even took myself thru a lot. I pray that I come out on top of this and better my life in the future.

-Keith

From The Beat: You know you can't change the past. What's done is done and it can't be undone. Focus right now, and plan out your future so you won't make any more bad decisions and end up facilities like these. Your family is waiting!

Being Pressured

This one kid was trying to hang out with us, so we told him he had to pull the fire alarm at school so we could get out of class. At first he said no, but we kept telling him to do it or he couldn't hang out with us, so he finally said yes, you could tell though he didn't want to do it, but he felt like he had to. Well, he ended up pulling the alarm and getting caught. We got out of class but he got a fine. He never hung out with us again and when we seen him around he avoided us.

-Zj

From The Beat: Why did you do something like that? Did you think you could take advantage of the fact the dude just wanted to make a friendship? Why be so hateful?

I'm a Panther

The animal that best describes me I'd say is a panther, because there aren't so many of me and I am mean, strong, smart, and sometimes violent when I have to be.

But I choose to be clam so I can succeed and get through High School and College and get my diploma and earn some clean money.

-Lil' Dauce

From The Beat: If you do that then you'll have also lived up to the idea of the Black Panther party at its best – freedom and pride. This is what they fought for – your right to make your way in the world without getting caught in the system. Keep fighting!

Lion King

The animal that describes me will be a lion. I chose the lion because people say I look like a lion, and I'm strong, and "run thangs," like a king lion himself.

Plus, I also like lions too. For some reason, I like lions and think they're the strongest, most feared, animal on this planet. I'm the "Young Lion" (King Shhhh.)

-Doogie Baby

From The Beat: King Doogie the Lionhearted, we like it. So what will you do to make sure that this young lion runs free, never to be caged again?

Desperate For Home

When I hear the word desperate, in my mind now I think of getting out of here and back home with the family I was raised by.

The patnas I always been with, well some of them like, damn there's one I'm really gon' be wit' because the rest just think everything a joke. But desperate make me think of the outs.

-D

From The Beat: What else comes to your mind when you hear the word desperate? The outs is all you think about, or is it all you could think of?

Untitled

Whats up Beat? Its yo' homeboy Oh, from Hayward. Just a couple of days I was out, not actually out, I was in Camp Sweeney but compare to this max unit it felt like I had gotten released. I was out on a home pass and got caught up with some shhh, I'm not trippin tho', I probably would of went down for some whole other shhh if I didn't get caught up. I was out there doing stupid stuff.

The thing that makes me mad is that I was about to get release, that's how life is. Life a bummer and then you die. But I'm still holding it down and keeping it alive.

-Oh

From The Beat: Why were you out doing stupid shhh? Don't you value your freedom? Life is rough, but it's up to you whether you wanna make it less rough, or more rougher.

A Crazy Story

One day I was walkin' down the street smokin' and the strangest thing in the world happened, guess what I saw? I saw a raccoon family. Two of the raccoons was smokin' some grapes, and I think they asked me to burn that shhhh.

Then I looked to my left and I seen a raccoon orgy. So I closed my eyes 'cause I thought I was trippin, but I when I opened my eyes the two raccoons that was smokin' pulled a gun out on me and tried to take my blunt away, so I ran home

The next day I walked back by the block and I saw the shhhh from the blunt on the ground in the cuts where the raccoons were smokin'. Then I saw hella ultra thins condoms were the raccoons were humpin' each other.

-Davonta

From The Beat: If there has ever been an argument for how drugs can mess with a person's mind, this is it. At the same time, with the sort of creativity you show here in remembering the story and putting it down on paper, you should be in Hollywood writing movie scripts, not locked up behind four walls!

I Love My God

I came in to here with a mind of a killer I didn't have a heart so I didn't care about nobody until I got fed up with the life of crime so I found God but I wasn't sure if I want to give up sins now that I'm in here on a serious charges I look up to God and want to be a son of God. I pray to God every night to change my life and to help me through the bad times and to look after my family and peers. I'm glad that I found God and that I know how to talk to Him.

- Tb

From The Beat: It's never too late to change your life, even if you are facing serious charges. Everything you do affects life in general, like your family, and peers. You can have a negative impact on people or a positive one. Glad you found your God, and that is helping you during this painful period.

If I Were A Tiger

If I were a tiger I would be the strongest one. As a tiger, I would have a strategy. Tigers are the biggest and fiercest cats in the game. Tigers are survivors, they hunt alone, provide for themselves and on top of all that they protect themselves and their cubs/kids.

So the tiger would have to be my choice of animal.

-Big Bo

From The Beat: Now that we know you're a tiger – tell us what you do to stay alive in the jungle. What hunts for you – what are you hunting for, and what will you do to keep you and yours alive and healthy and mostly, out of cages?

Bad News

I called my baby momma last night and my homie answered the phone.

He told me not to call his girl anymore, but I'm not going to let it bring me down.

I'm going to keep pushing forward. So I can complete my program and when I get out I can get my son. So I'm trying to say: Don't let things that are important to you go wrong or bring up down.

-Dave

From The Beat: We know you can get over this, and we know it because we've seen how much spirit you have, and have always had. Congratulations on the positive way you handled this painful situation.

Gorilla

If I could be an animal, the animal that I would choose would be a gorilla. Now the reason why I would pick a gorilla, is because a gorilla is big, black and scary, and at some times people say I look like a gorilla.

And if someone hurts me or my family, I would react like a wild beast, such as a gorilla.

-Murph The Youngster

From The Beat: Did you know that gorilla's are among the smartest of all the animals? And the ones that are capable of the most love for each other? Are you like a gorilla in that way too

Damn

Why do I feel so evil inside? It hurts to smile and to feel happy

Damn, why I got so much hatred against the world?

I got whip lashed on my back

That spelled out--damn

The rage, the frustration, the from the word that's sweet as honey

Damn, the money

Damn the cars

Damn it all

What is damn?

D is for destroy

Why? Because my life been ruined completely,

Distinct from A—anger that surge through my body,

The fatal M--memories of all the lonely nights and the

days when I cry for my momma an' daddy

N--for all the neglect that's been done. All the damage

that's been placed in my life is done.

'Another—can't replace my memories, face the fact that life is a word called "Damn."

-M-Teezy

From The Beat: True, as in "Damn this M-Teezy has talent" and "Damn, he could have a better life," and "Damn he's wiser than he's years", and "Damn, we hope he finds a better life" and then what do you know, suddenly that D-word has gone from being a curse, to a praise to a prayer. Life is what you make it... make it a blessing!

Why Do I keep Being Defiant?

Why am I so defiant?

Is it because I choose to or because of all the crying I've been through?

Why am I so defiant and always mad and wanna fight?

Is it because I'm rotting in this cell at night?

Why am I so defiant?

Is it 'cause kids get beat up by staff and staff get away with it?

Why am I so defiant?

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Ah – you turned a question, the kind that adults always throw at kids like a slap in the face, and turned it into a gem of expression. So what to do? You're in a position right now when other people control your life, your safety, your happiness. Now is the time to maintain, to hold your breath, count to ten, do whatever it takes to stay out of trouble while you're in here, and also to

Life Without Television

Past years have been crazy! I have done a lot of stuff I have never thought I would ever do. I have stolen stuff. I have committed crimes, and I have lied to close family members, like my mom. I told them I was going to do better, but I never did. I've sold drugs. There's no one I hurt that I know, but I probably have hurt a lot of people.

There's a lot of things I want to change, but it's hard, because that's the lifestyle I've lived for so long and was influenced by that lifestyle. And now I've got six months in Camp Sweeny. But the good thing about it is—I have enough time to think about my lifestyle: How I should treat my mother—better, and stay in school, and learn to respect the law.

-Bj

From The Beat: Not everyone that does wrong is honest enough to admit it. But you're facing your regrets and planning for your future. Do you have teachers in school with that you are cool with, teachers who can help you achieve these goals? The time for regrets is over. The time for moving on is here.

'Till The End Of Time—Me And You, Baby

Girl, I miss you

I wish I could be with you

Instead of being around all these j-cat ninjas

But if I was out

I would tell you

I miss and I love you

And hold you tight

And I would tell you things

That I was too scared to tell you

So until I see you again, girl

Love and I would do right beside you

And stay out of trouble

But, baby, I just want to thank you

For loving me

Who else would it be?

Just you and my mommy

So for that

Am change my whole life

And stay out this jail life

So I can be with you

And show how much I love you

'Cause am damn sho' going make love to you

So 'til the end

Me and you, baby

-Majia

From The Beat: Love the love poem, Majia, and we hope you get out soon to be with your girl and your mom, and mostly, to get with a new you, the one we see every Tuesday, who is so bright and positive and spirited. That's the you that will keep you out of trouble.

Never Been Pressured

What it do, Beat? It's yo' boy, Dude, down here at the Ranch. 'Bout to let it be known ain't no beezie in my blood. I ain't never been pressured into doin' shhh. Everything I did was from the heart. I was born in this shhh, not sworn in this shhh. I do it 'cause I gotta eat, not because it seem coo' or because I get a rush out of it. I live it every day, not just on weekends.

I'm go let it be known to all y'all suckas out there, when y'all lay down at night, I know y'all be thinking, "I'm a sucka. I gotta do this, so people won't think I'm soft." But when I go to sleep, I be sayin', "I'm go play these sucka ass ninjas like Atari." I do it 'cause I got to, not 'cause my ninjas want me to.

Stay solid, Beat.

- Dude

From The Beat: Maybe you are on your own in the streets, but what else can you do besides whatever it is that's illegal, that's messing you up, getting you all involved in the street drama and their consequences—juvy, Ranch and next time, maybe worse? Your heart may be in the streets metaphorically, but your heart is physically in your body and your body is at the Ranch. You don't have to "do" anything, such as stay in the streets, because, from what you write, you're the one making your own rules. Now you're living every day at the Ranch, not just on weekends.

Love

I was lost until I saw a beautiful girl
That turned my world
She was about five/four
With long black hair
With coco skin
That gleamed like a glow
From a black hole
I felt rapture
When I saw this beautiful girl
So I hurled my body at her
An' got stopped in my tracks
I think when I get close
Don't act like a slap
Or act like a mac
But a gentleman

-Marko

From The Beat: Good advice to yourself. You know you'd better talk tenderly to her, get to know her, let her learn who you are, and if someday she lets you know she wants you too, maybe you can hurl yourself at her, and only then, because you are a gentleman.

Being Locked Up

Handcuffs on my hands
Shackles on my legs
Being locked up is a pain
In the head
Every day
Looking over my shoulder
People telling me
When I can use the rest room
When to go to bed
That's the way
They make you pay
For what you did
That's why being locked up
Is a pain in the head

-Marko

From The Beat: Does all this teach you how precious your freedom and right to make your own decisions are? When you're free again, will you remember what it's like to have to ask someone else for permission to do almost everything? If so, then juvy has done part of its job, because you don't want to have to live that way.

That Animal

Man, to tell you the truth I see myself as a lion, king of the wild. The reason I said that is because I'm a Leo and I have a lot of anger problems. It really takes a lot to really calm me down, but if someone makes me laugh then I'll be cool. Well, I'm ending it there... Leos of mine...

-G Boy

From The Beat: So, what does it take to make you laugh?

This Truth

What's good wit' The Beat? Hopefully y'all doin' coo'. Maintaining, I hope.

I'm go let it be known 'bout this LCR (Log Cabin Ranch.) If you wanna go to school, go to college, be the President of the USA, don't come up here!

If you tryin' to do yo' time an' get out and get back to them streets, then you should come up here! No BS.

I came up here to do my time and get out. I been down since December 3, 2006. Fought my case. Been down fo' a hot second. Holding it down. But if you wanna do yo' time and get back out to them streets an' do yo' thang, then come up here.

- Dude

From The Beat: What about you? Do you have any aspirations for your future? Want to go to college? Own a business? Travel? Have a family of your own? Learn a profession? If so, what are you planning to do when you're home again? Or are you going straight back to the streets, maybe to mess up and head back to juvy or the Ranch?

Time's Up

Every day means another day
Another day gone by
Not yet tomorrow, still today
Every second, every minute
The time goes by
Like the sand slowly drippin' out
Of one vial to the next
On the outs, the time flies
But in here, time dies
Got no dead time
So it's almost my time
Time to go
Three and a half months to go
Anxious, like a kid
Finally 'bout to get me some
Tick, tick
The time goes by
I hope they let me out
Let the Bird free to fly

-Birdman

From The Beat: You've sure learned patience, laying low, staying to yourself and out of trouble. Will you transfer any of these lessons to your life on the outs? So once you reclaim your precious freedom, how are you going to protect it?

My Favorite Animal

If I were to pick an animal that best describes me, I would have to go with the "quetzal" an ancient bird native to the country of Guatemala where my family is from. The reason why I chose this animal is because it's a flashy and real colorful type of being, same as me. I like rockin' a fresh fitts in colors nobody ever seen, with a phat chain grilled out. It's also intelligent, similar to me when I make the right decisions. That's my animal I'm out.

-Lil' Spitta

From The Beat: What happened to the quetzal? Is there anything to be learned from its fate? Could you draw us a picture of this fabled bird?

Good-bye Beat

What's up Beat? This is the last time you would hear from me. I'm going to 850 and do my case there, but I'm strong.

Beat, take care and thank you for putting my pieces in the Beat. To the young folks out there, handle your business and keep y'all head up. One love Beat, and to the rest of the homies, late.

-Lucero

From The Beat: There is no reason that this has to be the last time we hear from you, even if you're home, in jail, or doing something entirely different. The Beat is always open to you. Thank you for all your contributions to The Beat, and good luck with the next episode in your life.

Scared

Scared of my hope I have. Scared of the way how it going to be when I step out of these doors. I am very terrified to change my life around, you know, because I did so much in my 18-year life. So I think if I change I am going to die. I am so scared that I wake up in a cold sweat crying, heart racing a mile away. I be trying to stop the tears but they won't stop one bit. It close to my time to get out, and I am scared.

-Tashelle

From The Beat: Being scared about what the world holds for you is understandable. The unknown is always a little scary. But don't let your fear keep you from moving forward. Why do you feel that if you change you might die? It seems to us that if you don't change, things won't be very good for you, since we can see where they have led you right now. Maybe you're trying to change everything all at once, and that scares you. Our advice is take it one step — and one change — at a time.

I'm Tired

I'm tired of wearing this purple khaki every day
I'm tired of looking at dese same as females and hearin'
they stank-ass attitude towards each other

I'm tired of eating the bs they give us every day
I'm tired of lookin' at these dumb, ugly, broke-ass boys
from the otha units

Man, I'm just tired of all that shhh fo' real.

I only been in here for like, what, a month. I know it seem like I'm just complainin', since othas but oh well, shhh. This place ain't for me. I don't belong here. I had too much shhh goin' for me on the outs and I just messed that up. I better be out on the 5th or I'ma have the whole hall on lockdown.

-Cookie Durson

From The Beat: So, you're threatening to disturb everybody's program if you don't get what you want when you want it? That's not the way responsible adults think. Growing up means thinking not just of yourself, but about others. The measure of just how tired you are of this place is whether you do the things that bring you back. If you can't stay out of here, then maybe you're not as tired of it as you claim.

You Lost

Damn, you messed up. It's good though. You were really never dere for me. It's good though. You did what you did. It was tough pain! You were really never and will never be dere! You da one dat lost. I didn't. Maybe yeah, you played da game. You played first and I played last. The last one is da one dat got to laugh!

-Monstrita

From The Beat: Since we don't know who you're writing to or what you're writing about (which would have made this a much better piece), we don't know what you got to laugh about. One thing we do know, however, is that when you choose to write about all three topics, you can't really write very much of interest (which is why we didn't print one of the pieces you wrote which was only two sentences long). Next time, choose just one topic to write about.

Desperate For Drugs

Another time I felt desperate when I always used to get high, stay high 24/7/365. Didn't have money to get high, used to do stupid shhh to try to get money. Damn, at that time I used to be hella desperate. I remember I used to wake up just thinking about getting high! Smokin' two eighths a day. It's good though, 'cause I'm through dat desperate stage.

-Monstrita

From The Beat: Addictions can definitely lead to desperation. Sometimes, you even get desperate for a match to light that smoke with. So we're very glad to read that you're through with that "desperate stage," which — to us — means your through with drugs.

My Big Mistake

Hi! My name is Deontae, and what I did on 10-29-07 was bad, because I had hit someone in the face. Afterwards, I felt kind of scared and sorry for that man, because he didn't do anything to me. To be honest, I didn't really wanna do it. I listened to someone else, because I didn't feel like doing it, but I wasn't thinking at the time. But now I'm in somewhere I don't wanna be.

And the second thing they said I did was snatch a laptop during school, but they think I cut, but that's not true, I didn't do that. But to keep it real, I did sock the man, but I'm really sorry and I really learned from my mistake. And I'm not going to do it any more, because I don't wanna be here and I just think what I did was dumb.

-Deontae

From The Beat: It takes a responsible person to acknowledge his own mistakes — and to commit himself not to make the same ones again. We're sorry you had to experience this to make you think about what you did, but we're happy that you took the opportunity to think about it, and to decide it wasn't worth it.

I Miss You Lil' Sister

I miss lil' sis like crazy. You been here for me from the start. You're my right hand, man, and we share each other's soul and heart. I live for you, and you live for me. I hope you do good wherever you are.

Remember big sis to lil' sis, you're my shining star. I love and miss you. I will always be there for you. Don't give up 'cause you know the Jehovah God is in your heart.

-MP

From The Beat: If you live for this person, then why did you do whatever it was that let the system take you away and separate the two of you? You must not have been thinking of him (or her?) when you handed your freedom away to the system. The time to think about how much you love another person is before you do something that risks losing that person, not after.

Aiming To Get My Diploma

Well, today is a very pressured and depressed day because shhh just ain't going right and I'm ready to go home. Now I have been here two months and a couple of days, and I am ready to go home and get on with my life and do what I gotta do, what I gotta do for myself. And that mean graduating from high school and go to college. But mind you, I'm going all the way out to Colorado, so I ain't go have shhh to do but go to school and get my diploma and do me. But yeah, dat's all. Holla Beat.

-H-Gurl

From The Beat: It doesn't matter how much or how little time you spend here, it's time that could be better spent somewhere else. Your goal — to finish high school and go to college — is exactly the right ticket to get you out of here and into a better life.

The Heart Of A Sneaky Cheetah

The animal I describe myself as, is a cheetah because to me, a cheetah is fast, just like me, and very sneaky, and I'm a sneaky ninja. And a cheetah blend in to tall grass and stuff and I could do the same with the clothing I wear, all black in the nighttime, black Forces, black hoodie, all black Rocawear pants, black beanie. In the daytime I wear a white tee, blue Akademiks (pants,) and white Forces. I attack my prey when I find out how weak they are.

-Money Mike

From The Beat: Open your eyes! You're a cheetah in a cage, and your keepers throw you food when it's time. You can't hunt, you can't roar, you can't even mate because there are no female cheetahs to be had. Apparently, you weren't as sneaky as you think you are.

Why?

Why you wasn't there
Why you didn't help
I've believed in you God
I feel like you turn your back
I've called on you so many times
But I guess this is a sign
It happens for a reason
Sorry to say
But I'm so disappointed
I guess this suppose to happen
And I understand
I was angry and mad at you
And not have faith
I've lost it
But sorry for not believing in you today.

-Lucero

From The Beat: It's hard to keep your faith when bad things happen to you and you cannot understand why. We don't pretend to understand God, but we wonder if God might not think that it is you who has turned your back on God, which is why He is not answering your prayers in the way you want. Whether there is a God or not, you have to have faith in yourself, and in your ability to create a better future than your past. Going to school and getting your diploma (and a good education) is the best prescription for that better future.

Bad Family News

What's up Beat? Me, not much, still here doing my time. I'm really not feeling the topics so I'ma just drop what's on my mind. I had too much shhh happen while I've been locked up. My mom was in Palestine taking care of my uncle that had open heart surgery. Then my dad got hospitalized for about a week because he had diabetes, kidney failure and pneumonia. He had a whole bunch of tubes running through his body. Then my aunt had surgery to remove her cancer on her neck.

Then I got hit with the worst news since my brother died: my mom's back got messed up and she became paralyzed in her right leg. I went bad when I found out. My mom just got back on October 24, but she might need to get surgery on her back to put her disc back in place.

Then today I found out that my aunt need to get her hip and knee caps replaced. I pretty much heard all the bad news I could handle. I'm ready to get the hell up out of here and get home. So for all you people who are locked up and got it hard, just do what I did and turn to God for help. Stay up!

-Muslim Warrior

From The Beat: It's very hard to be locked up at the best of times, but when things are going bad in your family, being unable to do anything to help is like the worst punishment imaginable. We hope your family members are making reasonable recoveries from their ailments, and that you're able to hold it together until you are reunited and able to help them by helping yourself.

Desperation Only Hurts Me

When I'm in the room, the only thing I think of back home — thinking hard of what's going on back at home. How my lady? How she doing? And how Pa's doin' and bras? But, shhh, I can think about it too much. Shhh gets to my head, though, then I feel desperate, going home and shhh. But I can't be like that.

Then I think about my ninjas. That makes me desperate to do what they doing, desperate to get out up in here. Shhh is how it is, though. I can't be desperate. It make things slower, if anything. Who it's hurting is myself, man, making my own self hurt by doing the things I am doing.

-Jesse

From The Beat: We like the end of this piece a lot, Jesse, because it shows that you recognize your own responsibility for the situation you're in. Since you gave up your freedom (or, at least, gave the system the power to take it from you), you also have the power to hold onto your freedom. Will you use that power?

Who Am I?

I'm that ninja from da block
Where birds flock
And I work on da first clock
'Cause that my birth spot
So I make my turf hot
'Cause I can and these ninjas respect
And I roll like da president, that why elect me
'Cause I just keep real and I just keep that steel
And I kill if I must so ninjas know I will

-Too Militant

From The Beat: How can you call this keeping it real when you don't mention that the only place you've rolled is into custody. The system has taken you out of commission, but you are still foolish enough to think that you can carry on as before without giving away even more of your precious time — the one thing that you can never get back. Sure, you can make your turf hot, but if you do, expect to be put on ice (again), like you are right now.

A Player Reaches Out

Lil' Mama, before you make any judgments, why don't you try to get to know me? Get to see what I'm all about, rather than listen to yo' homies? They always gon' be haters and there's a lot to hate on Savi. So of course they gon' talk foul, just to try to get back at me. If it's a female you heard it from, then they hatin', because I played them, got them for they money. They fell for the game I was lacin'. And if it's a ninja talking shhh, he just mad, 'cause I'm a hitter. His girl was feeling Savioso, so now he hatin', 'cause I'm wit' her.

So see, Lil' Mama? Do you see what I'm talking about? There's a lot of player hatin' and lies that come out your resource's mouth, so come to the main source and just find out for yourself, or ask a real homie about me, 'cause the truth's what they'll tell. They'll tell you how sick I am and how much I'ma sav.

Yeah, I turned to God and stopped bangin', but that don't make me all bad. I'm just smarter than a lot of y'all who glorify that life. I'm tryna grow up and go to college, get a job, have some kids and a wife.

-Savioso

From The Beat: Even though we applaud you for your decision to stop banging and start thinking about ways that will move you forward in life, we are trying appreciate your pitch to "Lil' Mama." You admit that you've cheated on other females for their money, that you've been underhanded with some ninjas by taking their females from them, and that you've done some bad things to people. We hope she gives you the respect to find out who you are directly from you, but if she decides not to, we can understand why.

When I Think

What's up wit' The Beat? This Hot Rod down here at the Ranch, holdin' it down, feel me? But when I think about certain things, I be feeling hella different ways. Like, when I think about my bras, I be feeling like, damn, I can't wait to get out and get money wit' my ninjas. Or when I think about how long I been down and how much time I still got left, I be feeling like gettin' on, for real.

But when I think about my lady, I be feeling different, for real, 'cause right now shhh ain't the same wit' me and her. It used to always just be good thoughts, but now I can't help but to think how she left me for dead. She say that she love me and I know she do, and to keep I real, I love her, too. But she gone do her, and I gotta accept it, and I know it's hard fa girls to hold they ninjas down, so I gotta respect it.

But when I think 'bout moms, I be feeling hurt, 'cause she gotta come see me wearing this Ranch shirt.

-Hot Rod

From The Beat: Many young men write that their ladies have moved on once their incarcerated, and we at The Beat wonder: when you mess up, get arrested and are sentenced to be away for months, even years, what were you thinking about in regard to your girlfriends when you did whatever? Did you think they'd respect you? Hold it down for you? But you're asking them to incarcerate their hearts, bury themselves, because you're away. They're not in juvy, you are. You sabotaged your relationship, she didn't. And your mom? Well, sounds like you are putting a lot on her too.

That Animal

The animal that best describes me would be a lion. I choose a lion because I move in a pack and lions move in packs. But I could also move on my own. And they go after the things they want. Example, they do what they gotta do to eat. And I go after my dough and do what I gotta do to get it, ya dig?

I'm also saying a lion because they're king of the jungle. I'm not saying I'm king, but I'm saying I stand out and people know not to play with ya boy, ya heard. So yeah, that's an animal that describes me, ya heard.

-Jr Canon

From The Beat: We can see how you could compare yourself to a lion in many ways. But have you thought about the ways you are different? Do lions go to war with other lions? Do strong lions prey upon weak lions? How can a lion grow to its potential strength of body and soul if it puts itself in the hands of its captors, in the hands of lion tamers?

Gone And Already Forgotten

When I get out, I am gonna try to do good. I don't want to get into trouble again and hurt my family or anyone else again. If the system gives me a chance this time, then I won't get another.

I also have a feeling I am going to hang out with the same people. It's going to be hard because of the peer pressure. I am trying to become stronger and try not to get pressured again. I see that the life that I'm living is not going to get me anywhere. Even though you get street credit, it doesn't matter. Will you still have street credit when you locked up or when you dead?

People might remember you at the time, but life moves on. People forget about you sooner or later. I've been locked up for four months now. People seem to have forgotten 'bout me in that time.

-Chinese Boy

From The Beat: We've been reading your writing for the last few months, and we know there're things you have done that you hope some people (like your parents) do forget about. We worry about you "feeling" that you'll hang out with your old partners and "hope" to be stronger. That lack of firm commitment (the absence of a promise to yourself) is a prescription for having to learn this bitter lesson all over again. We hope that's not the case, but it's entirely in your hands.

In And Out Of Jail

In the past year, I been in and out of jail. Is not cool. It's just doing time and not knowing when I'm going to get out. But forget it. I did the crime, so I'ma just do the time.

-Weasel

From The Beat: What does "doing" time mean to you? How much are you willing to give up in order to keep doing what brought you here? When will it be too much?

Unfair To Judge Me On My Past

I still remember the times I had so much fun when I was out of juvy. I got to spend some time with my family, talking to all of them, telling them what happened during my day, and all the fun times, going out with all my friends. But now I'm stuck in this hellhole for something I didn't even do, not being able to tell my side of the story, because they won't believe me, anyways.

Just because I have a previous case, automatically they assume I did it. "He just lying; put him in jail."

Why does this world have to judge people based on their past? I guess this is just how it is. But I can't blame it on everyone else. I shouldn't have a previous case, in the beginning, anyways.

Well, now I just gotta straighten up and start doing better than before, if I'm trying to get to anywhere in my life.

-Alex

From The Beat: You're absolutely right. We're all judged by our past actions and behavior, so now is the time to start creating a new future based on behavior and deeds you will not mind being judged for. What you did yesterday is what you're being judged on today. What you do today is what you'll be judged on tomorrow...

I'm Like A Caged Up Dog

If I could chose an animal to describe myself as, I would have to be a dog, because I feel like a beast, being caged up for so long, y'all know what I'm saying? Honestly, I don't think I would ever change and I know that's a bad word to say, but it's reality. I'm a beast, feel me?

Every time moms come visit me and we talk, she always tell me I'm going to do the right thing... I could do whatever I want, like graduating high school, going to college.

Me, personal, I think high school is sharp. That's why when I used to go, I was a square — sharp at all the corners. But now I'm lightweight, feel like a circle, a ninja roll with any.

Yeah, I gotta go, so now you know I blew up before I grew up. Got introduced to the game. Now I'm at ninjas' heads, like crew cut, suit up and lace ya boots up. It's war time. No crying.

-Omari

From The Beat: There may be no crying (although we don't believe that), but there's also no freedom. What does it say about you who has the ability to be a sharp student but, instead, allows himself just to be another prisoner, another slave? Is this all you see for your future?

Pressured

I was pressured by my big brother about stealing something. So when I did it, I got caught. Plus, I was under the influence, so I really didn't care. So I need to stay off pills, weed and drank.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: You need to stand up for yourself because you are the one paying the price. And when you stand up for yourself, you need to be able to say, "No," loud and clear when those drugs and that alcohol are passed your way.

That Animal

What it do wit' da Beat? Me, nothin', keeping ma head up doing it movin'. But if I could be a animal, I would be a untamed gorilla. The reason I say that because it reminds me of myself. Plus I like bananas, if you know what I mean. Also my block is like da zoo ya dig!

All right, Beat, I'm 'bout to go to da room. Holla at ya boy next week.

-Gully Bub

From The Beat: Well, you don't want to be a gorilla in a zoo. You want to be free to climb whatever trees are there, to eat all the bananas you want, and to find that perfect female gorilla.

My Mom Gave Up On Me

I did a lot, but I hope to do good when I get out of here an' go home, start over again an' do right. Yup, a ninja got to go to a group home for a lil' bit. An' while I am in there, I am go do right, because in here, shhh ain't good at all. Shhh crazy in here. I want to get out of here. But at home I feel like my mom gave up on a ninja, but ain't go let that shhh get to a ninja' helmet.

-Tishan

From The Beat: The important thing is that you don't give up on yourself. If you follow your own promise to do right (by going to school, listening to your mom, not doing the things that led you here), you will find that your mom will again be in your corner.

Chi Town

It's October 31

I'm out this piece like Starburst

I get to start over and come back by the end of the summer

I get to spend time with the Fam Bam and do it big on the 1st

I'ma live ma life and never come back to jail 'cause it's the worst

-Cinnamon

From The Beat: We're glad you're determined never to come back to jail. What's your plan for staying out?

Hand By Hand

As we walk hand by hand
Through nights and fights
That we are lovers TO da end

Although sometimes I think
Do you really love me
Because if my heart be broken
My love shall not ever see

As my hand touch your hand
We make the cutest couple
Lovely couple
Dat our love will never unbuckle

Baby, I only want you!
And you only!
For my eternally wife and eternity
Life, hand by hand N.N.H
Dat for everlasting you will
Be my boo
I love you.

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: Do you believe that "Love conquers all"? If so, let love conquer this temporary fall/Let this separation inspire real wisdom/And let this be your last experience with the system!

In The Past Years

What's good with The Beat? In the past year I have hurt somebody. It was my girlfriend. I think back and I'm sorry for doing that to her. But I love her with all my heart 'cause during our ups and downs she stayed by my side.

-Acie

From The Beat: Okay, since you threatened never to write again if we didn't publish this (it was a close call), we assume that means we can now count on you to write a lot more! For example, this piece is really only a beginning. Why do you think you hurt the person you loved? Why did it take the situation you're in now to look back and feel sorry for what you did? What does it mean to love her with all your heart? What kind of a girl is she, and what does she want in a man? These are all questions that you could have addressed to make this piece not just publishable, but a piece of the week.

Deep In

People talk about that they're deep in the game, always lyin' and shhh. But deep inside they're weak, nothing but talk and lies about stories they never been in. Can't hang with the beef; always look but never runs up.

Me, I'm with it till the wheels fall off because I can't stop wont stop. Five years in it to soon to get out of it. Have some more years to go. The j cats always hate because they have something you have, but they can't. They punks 'cause they make things up and tell you lies who their girl is. But hey, why lie? Keep it gangsta and tell the truth. Always talk behind your back but coo' with you in your face.

When you in the game you have to notice all that funny stuff. That just what the game is all about. Y'all dig? I'm out.

-Vago

From The Beat: We are as tired of reading that phrase "can't stop won't stop" as we are reading that the government promises "equal justice under law." There is no equal justice, despite those words carved in stone, and you CAN stop despite your big words. (It cannot be simply that you're in too "deep" since we've known far too many people in far deeper and longer than you who have finally seen a different way, and decided to take it.) We're looking for something deeper than slogans in your writing. We believe that you believe you won't stop (which may or may not prove to be true), but it's the "why" that is important to us. Don't tell us what you think about others who are not as "down" as you. Tell us about you, and what motivates you. Where do you think your choices will take you? Is that where you want to go? Why is this the path you've chosen? How many more years do you think you have without the law of averages catching up to you, so that you have to spend the rest of your life thinking, "If only..."? These are all questions that would take your surface writing into areas that haven't been explored and that might teach us something besides those boasts which simply don't impress us any more.

Time

Time is money, education and power,
The system making racks off of me in a hour,
My freedom being stripped they tryna charge me for life,
I'm thinking at a young age be quick to learn my rights,
I wanna be with my siblings home talking to my girl,
'Cause they can be a victim of killings in this cold world,
That's why I say forget da world 'cause it's the truth,
No evidence on me, tryna make a suspect in my shoes
This is some real shhh right here. They tryna play me in court for a homicide I didn't do and don't have evidence on me, and trying to cover it up with possession of stolen property.

-M-Goon

From The Beat: We're not sure what you mean by covering up with possession of stolen property, but if there is no evidence that you committed a homicide, and in fact, you didn't do it, then your lawyer should be able to get you off, at least from that charge. But the truth is that the system will not change, and if you don't want to face serious consequences (like giving up your freedom), you're going to have to make some changes yourself. In any case, we wish you luck on beating your current case.

Young Money

I don't see me as an animal
I see other people as snake
Because they all out to get me
But I be like Santa Claus
An be coming down in ya chimney

-Young Money

From The Beat: We don't think snakes are out to get you. In fact, they want to stay out of your way. Maybe, instead of invading through someone's chimney, you should be like the snake and stay out of their way!

The Past Years

In the past years, I've caused lots of pain for my mom. I used to do drugs on the outs and get in trouble. Every time I got caught, she would be crying a lot, saying shhh like, "You're killing me." It made me feel bad a little, but I didn't really care and kept doing it. Soon she kicked me out and sent me here.

-Kicked Out

From The Beat: You didn't put your name on what you wrote, so we gave you a name... Why didn't you care about your mother's feelings? Do you think she deserves such disrespect?

Getting On My Line

What's up Beat? My name is Keith. I called my mother like a few weeks ago and I asked to speak to my little brother and sisters. They were happy to hear my voice too. So we were talking and all three of my siblings asked me, "Why are you in jail so much?"

I said, "Man, just doing stupid things..." Then that's when they hopped on my line. So that's all I wanted to say. I love all three of y'all. Be good.

-Q Boy

From The Beat: They had a right to be mad, since your actions have also affected them. But tell us, how do you plan to show them that you love them? Telling them to be good isn't enough. You have to show them. How 'bout this... Next time you touch down, whatever you are tempted to do, ask yourself if you'd want your siblings to be doing it. If you answer no, then don't do it yourself.

Long Time Down

The Desperation I feel is when they give me two options, like to go to a group home and run away the next day because a ninja be up in here for so long I take the easy was out to get some gloats, smoke, and chill wit' da homies I'm out.

-Jr

From The Beat: You think this little time is "so long"? Have you thought about how much longer you'll have to do if you run and get caught? Have you considered doing your program, then getting out and living a life that doesn't lead to lock up?

Take A Ride In My Crazy Mind!

Take a ride in my mind! But I must warn you, it's crazy! They got me locked in a cage like a tiger in the zoo, surrounded by all these window warriors. I try to fight back, but they always win. It makes me mad, 'cause I try my best to win, but them suckas always win. I suck it up and take it as a loss, but, me, I don't let it go, 'cause when I'm laying down, 'bout to go to sleep, I'm thinking about how to get them back. They call me crazy and say I'm a psycho.

-Menace

From The Beat: There's one way you could try to win, and that's to refuse to fight. Can you ignore these guys? What do they want to hassle about? Did you know them before you came to juvy? Do they mess with all the guys in there with you, or only you? Whatever, can you move on with your program? What is your program?

Money

Money, money, money. That is what makes the world go around I'm tryna tell you. The thing that gets me is the things people would do to get it. I would tell you what, but that would be incriminating myself and we don't want that.

When I used to hit licks, I was tryin' ta get it. But then ninja start getting over on the T-House ninja. But I promised myself that I would never go out like that again and would die before I do. So for all you ninjas out there, get ya money little duffel bag boy.

-T-House

From The Beat: The money you're getting now is all going into the pocket of the system that has your life in their control: the cops that arrested you, the DA that charged you, the lawyer that defends you, and the staff of the hall that is keeping you. It seems that you're making money for everyone except yourself...

Loco

There is a mixture of Mayan and Aztec blood running through my veins. When there is a full moon, I could feel my ancestors rise from the dead and walk upon the earth as if they never left. They rise upon me and give me the strength to fight and never give up. Me and my homies are a new formation of our long gone ancestors--united and disciplined and battling for our empire. Fighting against the police and my enemies for life gets hard, but my ancestors give me the strength to fight. Much love.

-Menace

From The Beat: We feel you when you write about relating to your ancestors, but can you write more about how you feel you are creating an empire that justifies this perpetual war in the streets? What is at stake? What are you fighting for? Is it more than blocks where drugs get sold? You're gunning down each other. Don't many of your rivals share the same ancestors who are related to you? How would those ancestors feel if they knew you were warring on each other? What would it take for your enemies and you to establish peace in your streets, because this war is only helping those in power justify why so many young brown brothers need to stay locked up and off the streets!

I Wish

I wish I was home
Wish I never got sentenced
To the Ranch (LCR)
I wish I got to see my girl
Wish I could be
With my family
I wish that in the LCR
That they never give us extra time
I wish I never got stuck in the system
I wish I was already done
Getting my diploma
I wish I could kick it
With my ninjas on the outs
Damn, just wish that one day
I wake up from this hellhole dream I'm in
I wish that I could taste my mom's cooking
I wish I could wake up next to my girl
I miss that so much
I wish that one day I could drive again
I wish that they close down all placements and group homes
I just wish that I could wake up
Knowing that I'm not at Log Cabin Ranch
I wish

-Eb

From The Beat: Good poem. Have you thought about what you must do to never set foot in the system again? What are you doing to improve yourself from this reality?

I'm a week away from getting my diploma, I'm making up for some bad things I did. Now I got some credibility in life cause I'm giving in to receive.

In The Past Years

The life and the decision I've chosen bring a lot of pain to my loved ones. I've made lots of mistakes through my life. I've hurt my loved ones mentally and emotionally and I've also hurt myself. I wouldn't wanna change who I am – I would only like to improve on some things.

The pain I brought to my dad is making him feeling like he didn't do enough for me and my brother. The pain I brought my brother is him looking up to a brother who was up to no good.

But now that I'm a week away from getting my diploma, I'm making up for some bad things I did. Now I got some credibility in life cause I'm giving in to receive. And hopefully, my brother sees that I'm trying to be a good role model. Because I'll be out soon and he can pick up the positive from me. Keep your head up and I'll see you soon.

-Alvarez

From The Beat: Whatever you did in the past, it's all about the changes you make. Getting your high school diploma is very admirable and your brother and father must be proud. Keep achieving your goals one day at a time.

My Funny Talkin' Pet

If my pet could talk it would be kinda funny. I came home this one day with a lil damn black Chihuahua laying on my bed. He hella stinks. Me and my lil' sis always beat it. If he could talk, he'd probably go off on us for beating him. Ha ha. Alrato Beat.

-Lil' Nessa

From The Beat: Nessa, we don't find it even slightly funny that you and your sister beat your dog. He depends on you for shelter and food and protection. There's nothing funny about beating a helpless creature. Perhaps you've been beaten by someone much larger than yourself. If so, we bet it didn't feel good. And we bet you didn't think it was right or fair. Next time you even begin to think about harming a defenseless creature, like a cat or a dog, imagine that it's you getting beaten. That should put a stop to it.

A Desperate Thought

I wasn't too desperate to hear that my carnal got stuck numerous times all over his body and head. If they would of told me sooner I would have went to go revenge on whoever did it to him. That's why my familia didn't want to tell me nothing because they know how I would of reacted off that situation. Now my carnal is 100 percent and healthy as a homeboy should be.

-Alviso

From The Beat: The desire for revenge is very human, yet it is up to you as a young person to change the world – to stop the violence. How is that possible though? Your family knows you well, but what would have happened if you would have "taken revenge" for your homeboy and killed someone, and then your homeboy ends up okay? Would that be an eye for an eye?

Free Bird

Well if I had to choose to be an animal, I would be a bird – a beautiful bird, as a matter of fact. Why you ask? Well because birds are free. That's what I see in my window everyday I see a new day, so that makes me feel like I can relate to the topic. Now that I think about it more, yes, I'll be a bird because I'll get to travel all over the world and people love birds – so, I guess I'll get a lot of attention – que no?

Well Beat, that's it for now, I guess because that staff is looking at me weird, otra vez (again). So, alrato for now and take care todos, late.

-PI

From The Beat: This is beautiful. Being a bird would be an amazing and freeing experience and quite a contrast to the life you are living behind locked doors. Where would you like to travel in the world?

Tomorrow is Never Promised

Hey Beat, what's good with it? It's your boy, that thug-living g dropping a few lines. Well, I want to talk about some shhh that's kinda crazy.

Well, how can I start... well, me and my boy wanted to go job hunting. Me and the homie were talking to my mom about a job she wanted to give us. But we never got to complete our mission because we started doing some crazy shhh, which we never got caught for. But like people say: 'If you don't get caught that time, you'll probably get caught later.' We didn't believe in that, so we kept doing our thang.

A few weeks later I got busted with assault with a deadly weapon, and terrorist threats. Later on, my boy got caught basically, for what I'm trying to say if you don't get caught the first time, you will the next time.

-Playboy

From The Beat: So, how do you feel about this? Lucky or smart? But the real question is what your plans are when you leave this place ... is it to make a serious change or are you still trying to outsmart the system?

Not all emotions are as simple as anger and happiness, which are on opposite ends of the emotional spectrum.

How Moods Can Change You

Moods will always affect the manner that you choose to handle a situation. Anger, for instance, can cause us to jump hastily to conclusions without giving us the foresight to see the consequences. Happiness, on the other hand, can help make difficult situations roll off you like water off a duck.

Not all emotions are as simple as anger and happiness, which are on opposite ends of the emotional spectrum. Love, for instance, is a powerful emotion that can cause you either to hug the first person you see, or strangle them. No matter what mood you are in, it can strongly influence the way you approach a situation. That is why it is really critical to think about our actions before acting.

-Dylan

From The Beat: Well written, well reasoned. We hope you'll apply this common sense to your own behavior when you're released. Thank you for the good writing.

Zodiac Animal

My zodiac animal would be the Ox. The ox is one of the strong zodiac that is brave, loyal and protects others. He finds his own path in his life and always has to think of good choices to make.

To think of this reminds me of the topic "In the past years.." how I made a choice that got me locked up. I caused my family to lose trust in me, and love for me, but they giving me a second chance to show them so it's all good. I hope I don't fail to do this. And that I'm sorry for the homies that's shed tears before me.

Sorry Auntie Em, we took a journey that turned three boys to men. Much love and respect. A'ight Beats, I'm out!

-Viet Ox

From The Beat: We hope you're able to adapt those strong qualities of the ox to your own life. Your family may have lost trust in you, but they never lost love for you. (If they did not love you, they would not be giving you a second chance.) We don't know what your apology to Auntie Em means, exactly, but we'd love to know how it turned three boys into men.

Life Goes On 2/11

What's up Beat? This that one and only TL. Shhh, I just don't know what's happening with my case. I get good news then bad news. It's an ever going battle. Who would be the victor? Shhh, I don't know. I don't even want to listen to my case, shhh, 'cause I want to hear one thing. It's going to change again, so forget this. But after all this, life goes on!

- TL

From The Beat: One of the hardest things about being locked up is not being able either to control events on the outside, or even to keep up with everything that's going on. The only way to avoid feeling what you're feeling is to find a way never to come back!

Desperate

When I felt desperation when I was running from the cops. I jumped over the fence and I seen two dogs. I either could run or give up. I ran through the dogs and it took a piece of my leg.

-Joe

From The Beat: We wish you had put in a lot more details about this event. When you write about three or four topics, you can't give us the details we want. Next time, choose just one topic to write about.

Realize, Truth

Stuck in a rut
Admit you don't give a what
Lost in this wickedness

Losing my mind, and I know you can't handle this
Check this.. realize, won't think twice
Some of them homies doing 25 to life
Just because they used a knife
Never old enough to have a family and a wife
So sad some kids don't even have dads
It makes you think
You could get locked up within a blink
Kids think they hard
Running around town with stolen ATM cards
Next thing you know your behind bars
Just 'cause you felt like jacking some cars
So realize: Truth=power=strength

-Koh Deen Juggalo

From The Beat: Realizing you could get locked up in a blink (or worse), what changes are in your future? What will you do differently because of this experience?

Causing Pain

I caused my grandma great pain when I get locked up in here. It's not coo'. I see her crying and it makes me wanna cry. But I gotta stay strong for myself and for her.

-Joe

From The Beat: Yes, you do have to stay strong. But what else do you have to do so that you can see your grandma stop crying for you, and start smiling for you?

My Elder

My elder is a man that knows right from wrong.

My elder is not a man — above them all.

But my elder is the man that won't steer you wrong.

My elder is not the man that thinks he knows it all,

But my elder is the man that is still learning from us all.

My elder has seen many men fall,

Though, my elder is still standing tall.

My elder is a man that don't look scary at all,

But my elder is a man that would confront you all.

My elder would give you the teaching to be a man,

But my elder is the man that won't stand and hold your hand.

He will leave you to find your own path,

But he will still be by your side in the aftermath.

-Travieso Mas Chingon

From The Beat: This is an interesting poem, but we can't tell if you're writing about a real man or about God. How has this "Elder" helped you?

Special Love

Well Beat, this vato ain't feeling the topics, so I'ma write a song that was for some special jaina:

"Baby girl,

just sitting here thinking how much I love you,
how you make my dreams come true to reality.

Every time I look at you in the eyes,

I look up in the sky

thanking God for letting me be by your side

because when I hold you I'm my arms,

I never want to let you go.

To me you're more than the world.

I knew it from the very start when I looked into your eyes.

I knew me and you were meant to be together.

Now look at us baby girl, our love is lasting forever."

Well this psycho minded vato is gone. Alrato. Much respect.

-Lil' Psycho

From The Beat: If you and she were meant to be together, then why aren't you? Why did you risk losing this special love? Was it worth giving the system the power it needed to take you away from her?

Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright

Hey, it's me once again coming at you from this maximum security unit. But if I have to have an animal that best describes me, it would be a tiger or something of that nature. It would be a tiger because I do what I want and I like to fight. Also, I'm pretty much fearless of lots of things.

But everything has a weakness, right. But my time is up, so till next time this abstract minded homeboy is gone.

-Pancho

From The Beat: Tigers are a protected species because there are fewer and fewer of them in the wild. In fact, like a lot of tigers, you have let yourself be captured and put in a cage. What's your plan for making sure this doesn't happen again?

Being Pressured

Hey Beat, it's me again. Man, I've been pressured so many times. Like when my homies in da hood be telling me to do this bad thing to put in work fo' yo' 'hood and fo' yo' rep. I think of it now, that's stupid.

I should've never let any of da homies pressure me. And should've just done good. But when I get out, I'm not going to let them pressure me into stupid shhh anymore. And do right stuff. Well that's all I got to say for now. Late Beat!

-Damaged Khmer

From The Beat: You're right, DK, it's all up to you whether you give in to pressure or resist. It takes courage to be able to stand up to your homies and say, "No," when they pressure you to do things you know you shouldn't do. Do you have that kind of courage?

That Animal

Hey Beat, what's up with y'all? Well, I'm good.

To me, I think a horse describes me best, because I liked running when I was little. I used to be cross country and track and field. I like to be a horse, because they can run free really fast through the field, and just keep running. That's what I think that best describes me.

Well I'm out. A'ight, peace Beat.

-Damaged Khmer

From The Beat: Apparently, you weren't able to run fast enough to keep yourself out of here! Maybe it's time not just to run as fast as a horse, but also to be as smart as a horse!

So Animal

What up Beat? It's yo' uso Saki still rocking my winger's to da Beat.

But the animal that describes me the most is a shark. I roam around and stay on my toes to protect the 'hood. A shark is fearless, 'cause I am fearless to anything and any man. And a shark like runs the waters. But it's the opposite of me. I am roaming the street fearless as well.

A'ight Beat, this Samoan Shark is in the wind. Sa Love.

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: You aren't the only "shark" in these dirty waters. A shark has very sharp teeth, but a tiny brain. If your fearlessness leads you to hand away your freedom to strangers (like now), then how much is it worth?

This Animal I Am

Let me say what up to you Beaters.

If I was an animal, I'd say I am a cheetah, because I'm fast on my feet and when I see an enemy I'm always good on the creep, and if they run I catch 'em like I'm doing sixty-an-hour, I'm a monster on my block you could say I'm one with the power, just like the great cat I'm always first to jump and keep my anger hidden but let it out on a chump, and I don't go looking for fights but unlike the day you don't wanna catch me at night, and when you see me you would see buff thickness and the cheetah I'm out with the quickness.....

-Goofy Maux

From The Beat: So you say you quick like a cheetah/ you say you smash but never get beat up/ You saying that when it's cold you like to turn the heat up/ We get you, you're Mr. Can't 'Nobody mess with me.'/ You run quicker than blood dripping from your chest quickly/ But just remember next time you wanna ride to the fullest/ A cheetah might be fast but they can't out run bullets/.

The Animal I Would Be!

I am Native American, and animals all have a certain thing that they do. Everyone has an animal that they are. Me, myself, I am a bear. A bear represents healing. A bear helps the people. It takes away sickness from people.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Do you know what tribe your family represents? Are you the kind of "bear" that helps the people? In what ways?

The Good Times

I have caused pain to a couple of people. They thought they would whip my ass, but I proved them wrong. This one guy could not play body shots for two months cause of his ribs hurt, only a couple like two or three.

Yes, I have been pressured into smoking weed. My brother told me to. He made me feel bad by saying no. I did it cause I felt bad. I got hella lit. I could not eat or buy food until I got home.

No, because I do it on my own. I would be a monkey, because that's what they call me. I used to climb trees when I was young.

-Monkey

From The Beat: You have tried to write about three separate topics in one piece. That can't be done. Next time, choose just one topic that you want to write about, then write as much as you can about that one topic.

Causing Pain

Hey, Q-vole Beat? It's this homeboy Pancho once again in the max unit coming from the beautiful streets of Gilroy. But on tonight's topics about causing someone pain, well, I'm always causing pain to my mother because these last couple of years I've been in and out of here. I know every time I come in, my mother hurts inside and I just go on like it don't even matter to me. But really inside I do care. But my time is running short, so this abstract minded vato is out.

-Pancho

From The Beat: What is an "abstract minded" vato? (Do you mean an absent minded vato?) But back to your topic, recognizing that you've caused pain to the one person who deserves your love and respect, should be the beginning of changes in your life. Are those changes coming?

Being Pressured

have you ever been pressured into doing something you didn't want to do
it's a crazy life in the outs
so take it day by day
and don't let nobody pressure you
into doing something you didn't want to
take it from me
i'm locked up the s-j-p-d's custody
countin' down the days 'till i'm free
so if you want to be your own man
don't let nobody walk your walk
and talk your talk
do your thang
don't be a follower be a leader
and if you don't you're a fool
for letting someone control you

-Lil' Wicho

From The Beat: You are exactly right, people need to lead not follow. We wish there were more people with your same mentality. Don't let the pressure get to you. Get out and don't let any negative energy get to the point where you might do something to bring you back to the halls.

A Chihuahua

An animal that best describes me would be a Chihuahua because I have big ass pointy ears and I am hella small. But I am hella tough, and I don't back down from nobody. I throw it down with any vato that wants to get down, even if I'm small just like a Chihuahua.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: We like your choice of animal and your reasons for making it. We can picture you standing your ground and barking away at animals that are bigger than you! (Do you ever just curl up in someone's lap for comfort and warmth?)

In The Past Years

In the past years
Yea it seems like that
did two months and I want to go back
Back to the days when I was just a little kid
I didn't know nothing
Holding on my mama when we walked in the store
Now I'm locked up
My mama shedding tears for me
I broke her heart
When I see her in the visiting room
I see a part of her died
She puts on a smile
But deep and inside
She wants to scream and cry
And all I can say is hi mama

-Lil' Wicho

From The Beat: Your mama is sad because she wants you home. She wears a smile every time you see her because she is really happy to see you, although we know you can see the sadness in her eyes, but that's because she doesn't wanna see you in jail. She wants you home. Next time you see her don't just say hi, tell her you love her. And when you get out, think about all the times she came to see you. Do you want your mama to be visiting you in jail all your life? Wouldn't you rather be with her right now as you are doing legit things?

Bull!

Hey Beat, what up!
This your girl Baybe-G
Dropping in a couple
Of linas for y'all
To read. Well any
Ways, the day before
Yesterday my mom
Brought in hella snacks
For the unit thinking
That I was going to
Placement in the next
Day, but I didn't.
So yeah, when I
Had passed out soda
In a cup to everybody,
There was the bottom
Of the bottle. So my
Home girl took it to her
Room and drank it there.
And the next day
Staff saw it and
Gave her 30minutes for it.
Later on in the day
Shift, and the supervisor
put her on C level for
many days, then moved it down
to a few days.

-Baybe-G

From The Beat: And how do you feel about that? By the way, we hope you get your placement issue settled soon.

Jaws

I would be a great white shark because I like swimming and water. They're strong and have very strong jaw. They ain't scared of nothing, and they have a lot of extra teeth.

-Joe

From The Beat: Are you saying that you aren't scared of anything, or that you wish you weren't scared of anything? Are you scared of sharks?

In My Past Years

In the past years I notice how I went from being a mama's boy to being an menace to society. In the past years, I notice how I went from being a straight A student to high school failure and almost drop out. In the past years I notice how I went from a drug free little boy to a weed smoking addict. Only if I could change my past years. Only if I could change my past years I wouldn't be here.

-Trot

From The Beat: You have described a life that moves from good to bad, from happy to sad, from free to had! None of that can be changed, but all of the future can be. What do you hope for your future, and how do you plan to achieve it?

Past Years

In the past years I hurt a lot of people. One, started out with my mom, never listened to her for the past years until now. But now she's shedding tears. I hurt my pops I went on this evil route smoking drinking brew, smashing on foo's who didn't take me serious. I hurt my uncle by following his step and being the next generation of the family to be a gangbanger. I hurt the people at my school by providing them "right" that I would succeed in a bad way, and not the right. With that said, I would like to apologize to my family and my school.

-Listo

From The Beat: We're sure that they accept your apology. However the best way to make up for all your past years of hurting all these people is to get out and succeed in a positive way. Don't worry about the past, worry about the future and how you can make things better.

The Exorcist

What's up Beat. Well, what still haunts me 'till this day is that movie the Exorcist. Every since I seen that movie, the first one they made, it scared the heck out of me and every time I go to sleep and especially when I don't have a roommate, I think of that scary looking girl and I think it's going to happen to me, or it's in the room with me. But yeah, thats what still haunts me. Much love to all the homies.

-Baby Girl

From The Beat: You can teach yourself to fall asleep thinking of good things, of pleasant things. Scientists who study dreams and the brain know that some people can even learn to direct themselves to have the kinds of dreams they want. Wouldn't that be cool? As for the Exorcist, damn, when that movie came out it scared many of us too!

In The Past Year

In the past year I've seen many shed tears
In the past year I've seen dead peers
In the past years
Someone told me
United we stand, divided we fall
In the past year, I've seen four Juvi walls

-Lil' C

From The Beat: How many tears have you shed in the past year? Are you planning any changes in your life so that you don't have to shed so many tears in the future?

If My Dog Could Talk"

Hey Beat! What up? Well, as for me, nothing much, just chillin', hoping my time could go by faster, 'cause I'm gonna be here until March 2008!

Well if my pet could talk, it would be awesome! Because I would talk with him all the time. He's my best friend. He knows all my secrets. I tell him everything! And he sees everything I do, so I'm pretty sure he would put me on blast. But other than that, I'm always getting high in front of him! Or I get him high with me. But if my pup could talk, it would be off the hook! Well, I'm out for now.

To all - stay up and stay solid. Much love.

-Lil' Changa

From The Beat: If you love your pet, you won't give him drugs. You're shortening his life, you're really poisoning him by giving him drugs. And what do you think you're doing to yourself. If you won't treat yourself with respect, at least honor your dog's life by taking good care of him.

Getting Money

What's good Beat? Tonight I'm writing about something I was desperate for on the outs. I was constantly on a paper chase. I was selling a lot of drugs. All different kinds just to get money. Once you start making that fast money it is so addicting. Another thing I was doing was pulling hella licks. Once you get introduced to that fast money it's hard to stop getting it. But it's what I had to do to survive.

Well Beat I'm all out of time. So to all in the hall stay strong.

-Nok

From The Beat: You're right fast money is addicting. Who wouldn't be addicted to money if you got it coming in from all directions whether it's illegal or legal. We know you have to survive but there are other ways you can go about making money. Selling shirts, getting a job, you know, finding a legit hustle, 'cause although the money might look sweet, the place you're in right now doesn't. It's not worth the risk, is it? If you're really about your money like you said, find a legit hustle, and something that won't bring you to jail, 'cause you can't be making any money up in jail, but the system is making plenty off of you.

Another Note To The Haters

Hey Beat, what's up?

None of the topics caught my interest this week so I decided I'm gonna write about why I think people hate. I think people hate because they have low self-esteem. They're not confident in themselves, so they insult and talk shhh behind others backs. It makes them feel good about themselves, but deep down inside they are hurting because there's something about you they wish they had, for example: your looks, your possessions, or - to cut a long list of things short - your lifestyle. I believe people hate because they are jealous of something you got. I love haters. They raise my self-esteem higher because I believe people hate because they are jealous.

I'm gonna share a little story: I wasn't always so positive about hating. In fact, I used to hate haters. They would often send me home crying, but one day I just stopped given a damn what people think of me. It doesn't matter what other people think of you - it only matters what you think of yourself. If you are loving who you are, that is all that matters. I love who I am every time I look in the mirror. I love what I see. I also love my personality. Well Beat, this is all I gotta say. Late.

-Big Meg

From The Beat: Well, it is nice to hear that you weren't always so confident as you are now. Tuning out the haters is really hard and perhaps you can share the secret of how you went from hearing what they said to only listening to yourself.

My Animal

An animal that would describe me is a wolf. A wolf has the strength to ride alone, but chooses to run in a pack. But if the situation turns sour, he will ride it out alone an' still survive.

-My Animal

From The Beat: Not all wolves manage to survive... What's your plan for future survival?

Pressured

Yes, I got pressured into doing a crime. That got me in here. Nothing stopped me from saying no. I didn't. I got a few months in Juvenile Hall. No, I would not let no one influence me no more.

-Joe

From The Beat: Again, we want to urge you to choose just one topic to write a lot more about. Here, we get just a taste of the pressure you say you got. If nothing stopped you from saying no, why did you say yes? Didn't you know the consequences? Do you have the strength to say no the next time?

Fade Up

Dear The Beat! What it don't do.

Today in our young lives we

Handle disappointment by fading up.

If some one come up to you talking
Stupid and spreading shhh in your face,

As I would say "fade up." The way

I handle it is for me to know and

For them to find out. Not knowing

When or were my actions will take

Place. Don't hate. Be glad. It's not

me in your face. Not caring what

Race you are and what hood you

From. When it comes to disappointment

And my name is in it, expect the

Unexpected and be ready to fade

Up! No flaking. I'm full, so

What you got for me. So like I

Said, fade up and get laid out!

-Boss Hogg

From The Beat: Tough talk. Why do you feel the need to talk like that? You're with friends, here at The Beat. What is it that convinced you that tough talk would solve your problems? Most of us want the same things - a shot at being happy, a shot at finding love and good work. The way to get there is to drop the tough talk and recognize that you're part of a whole huge family of people who really just want, as Rodney King said, to get along with each other. Write us something real, next time.

Locked Up

The thing that disappoints me the most is that I never thought I would ever get locked up. The first time I got locked up I couldn't believe it.

And now this is my second time getting locked up. It disappoints me that a person like me could be in a place like this. There's so much for me out there that it really disappoints me to be in here.

That's the disappointment I can think of that bothers me the most.

-Tinkerbell

From The Beat: So, the unbelievable has happened, and then happened again. What's going on? Why has your life moved in this direction? You'd better start looking deeply into what motivates you to do the things that bring you to the hall. Start now. The next time, it can hardly be a surprise. So cut it off at the pass. Let there be no next time.

Why?

I am a good student.
I do very good in school.
I have a big family.
There are a lot of us
and I am the second oldest,
so I have a lot of responsibilities.
I have to help taking care of my two
baby sisters, my baby brother
and even older ones.
I think I have a lot of qualities a lot of
girls in here don't have.
I am very respectful to everyone.
I mind my own business.
But not all people are perfect
and some end up in places like this
that are not meant for people like me.
Well people, keep your heads up.
Leave the drama for your mama.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We don't know why you're here, but surely, many girls before you have felt that they, too, don't belong here. Well, prove it, as they say. When you are released, don't do whatever it was that got you in here.

Last February

Last February I started talking to this guy and his name was David. I asked him to be my Valentine and we started from there. When I talked to him, I thought I would never like him or ever meet him. Then we started talking more and I learned more about him and I started liking him and I found myself always waiting for him to call or text me. We would text each other all day and we would talk about everything.

He was 21 and I lied and told him I was 18. David lived in Fresno and we always planned to meet up but then I would tell him I had something to do, but one day during Spring Break I finally decided to meet up with him and stay at his house for the weekend. So he came from Fresno to San Jose and we met at Oakridge Mall. That weekend was really fun but my mom or anyone else didn't know where I was.

To cut this short, he got brain cancer and almost ended up going to jail because of me and I know I hurt him a lot and I just want him to know that I'm sorry.

-Corina

From The Beat: Yikes! This is quite a story. It seems like you still have feelings for David and that you owe him an apology. Lying to people is never a good idea, especially when he could get in serious trouble. We're most interested in what you learned from

Elder

The most important person in my life was my grandma. She was always here for me, my sister and my brother. She took care of me since I was seven years old. My mother was never able to care of me after my father died.

My grandma was my mother figure.
It saddens me to think that she is no longer with me. She always told me to handle my business and be successful.

I love my grandma.
Rest In Paradise Grandma
March 30, 2007

-F Gurl

From The Beat: We are very sorry for your losses. We don't know the story about your mom, but we hope she recovers from her grief, too. Let yourself cry when you feel like crying. Crying is sort of like writing. Those difficult thoughts and emotions get swept out of the body on words and tears and after a good cry or a good time with pencil and paper, you feel at least a bit better.

This Disappointment

When I'm disappointed in myself
I like to get high,
'cause that's the only thing that
seems to ease my pain.

Mary Jane and Crystal Meth
keep me from gong insane.
But I'm always disappointed in myself.
That's why I'm in the game.

I do what I do and I ain't got no shame.
But when sober, the disappointment and
feelings seem to always still be there.
That's when I say "fudge it, who cares."

-Moriah

From The Beat: You've certainly got it wrong about meth. That stuff will destroy your brain. You have to say: I care, I care what happens to me. I deserve to be happy, and drugs are not the answer. You know that's true, Moriah. The question is, what do you need to do to stop. If you're like most people - the answer is - you need help. Millions of people have learned how to say no. You can, too. But you have to ask for the help.

Desperation

Waking up to little smiles
happiness within a child.
I'm desperate to see my babies
ages one and three.

My little brother Xavier,
he goes into my room every
morning and crawls into my bed
and gives me kisses.

It warms my heart
when I'm close to him and
I'm desperate to see his little smile.

Alyssa, she is only three
but she acts like she is fifteen.
She looks up to me no matter what
and is always happy to see me.
The feeling of having a child's love is
indescribable. I still have their love
but I'm desperate to see them. I'm
terrified that they won't remember
me when I go home.

That would devastate me.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: It seems like these are two great reasons to get your life back on track. Your writing over the past few weeks proves that you will make some serious changes and we wish you the best of luck.

The Homie's Passing Still Haunts You

What up Beat and Beat readers! I hope all is well up in here. Well, as that's said, this is your girl Bernadette.

Today's topic is" what is a memory that still haunts you. Well, mine is when one of the homeboys passed away in 2003. His name is Jacob. He passed away by playing a stupid game called body shots. He was only 16 years old. He was a solid ass homie. May he rest in Paradise, and as for the rest of the fallen soldiers in the game - may they all rest in paradise. Those are all memories I won't forget. They will always be missed and never forgotten.

-Travi

From The Beat: We are so sorry that you've lost friends to senseless violence. It would be wise to find friends who don't play stupid games. Make yourself a rule - no hanging out with folks who carry weapons or do stupid shhhh. If all your friends stopped, no one would have to worry. A peaceful way has to start somewhere. Why not let it begin with you.

Look Where I Ended Up

Look homeboys and homegirls
I've been pressured at school if
You want to know what school
I go to is Overfelt. Foo's tell
Me the homeboys ain't down
That we didn't do shhh at all
But these people that told me
That I wasn't down were black
G's and hyphy boys. But I was
Pressured to crack off a rumble
Me and my boy cracked it off
few homies got into it
And two of my aAsian G homies
Got into it and look what happen
I'm locked up for just getting
Pressured, well forget this shhh.

-Listo

From The Beat: You right, you should forget this shhh, 'cause look where you at! Don't do something cause somebody pressures you to do it. Lead don't follow.

A Beat Medley

1. What comes to my mind when I hear the word desperate is getting out of here. I'm desperate to start over. Yes, I've also seen people act desperate towards people they like or have a crush on – they just throw themselves at them. It does not look cute, especially if their crush doesn't like them in return.

2. I've caused pain to some people when I was angry because they caused me pain. I felt like I needed to get them back so they wouldn't try to cause me pain ever again.

3. Yes, I've been pressured. I've been pressured to drink alcohol, what stopped me from saying no was because I already said no and I was getting annoyed when my peers were all in my face drunk so I just said 'Yeah' so they would leave me alone. Then I got drunk and the consequence was I threw up all over the place. I wouldn't let anyone influence me again.

4. If I could be an animal, I'd be a cheetah because they are beautiful, slick and get what they want.

-Serena

From The Beat: You seem to hit on all the topics here and we appreciate your thoughtful responses. Now, are you like a Cheetah now or is that what you want to be like?

Before

Before I came here I was always like: Send me to the hall. I can take it. It's nothing to me.

That's what I would say to everyone who was trying to help me. But I never learned how to accept the fact that I need to change.

Now that I have changed and know that I don't want to be here, I have to stay here for a long time. It sucks because I actually have a life to go home to. It hurts me to see the people I love the most cry for me. I'm sorry I messed up, for myself, and for my loved ones.

-R

From The Beat: Obviously, this is what it took to open your eyes and your mind, maybe even your heart. Our recommendation is that while you are in the hall, you read as many good books as you can. Time flies when you're reading a good book. Hey, here's a quickie test: can you point to Sri Lanka on the map? How about Madagascar? A few evenings with an atlas and you'd have no problem with a question like that. Do you know what it means to commiserate? A few minutes with the dictionary – no problem. You're a smart fellow. Start using that brain. Use this time to educate yourself.

Someone On My Mind

What's cracking Beat? This is Loonie. Well today, I'm going to write about what's on my mind. So, I been thinking about my man every single day that passes by. I'm so mad that we have to be separated from each other. I just want for me and my man to be doing good. I'm sure some day will be close together. Damn, I can't get him off of my mind. When I see him I feel like going up to him and holding him in my arms and never letting go of him. Whatever is going on between us is not so good right now but it's like, all right, it won't be like this forever. Things will get better. I'm not going to give up on our relationship. I really do want to make it with him. I do feel bad for what he's going through right now, too. I don't like how things are going right now. Well that's it for now. So till next time I'm still here.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: The saga of Lonnie and her long-lost man continues ... Well, it seems like the more you think about it, the more you want to be back with him. It must be hard to not be able to communicate, so

In The Past Years

I would say the person that I put through pain these past years would be my mom. I wouldn't listen to her. I would leave when I wanted to. Sometimes I would come home and she would be crying. But I would do what I wanted. I never told her when I was coming home and where I was going.

Sometimes, I never even came home from school and I wouldn't call to let her know if I was ok. I remember my mom telling me she didn't want me to leave cause she had a bad feeling but I didn't listen. I left and I came home and she started crying cause she saw me with a black eye and a bloody nose. Even after that I never listened at all. I wouldn't care what she had to say 'cause of what she was doing to me at the time. I guess the reason I didn't listen to her was because she was on drugs. I think that's why I was doing the things I was doing, cause it affected me in so many ways.

-Vivian

From The Beat: Do you think your mother knows why you were putting her through hard times? From what you've shared with us over the past few weeks, it seems like she would understand – but like any mother, she just wants you to be safe.

Grandma

Well, in the past year, I think that the person I really hurt is my grandma Blanca. I put her through a lot of shhh and it really kills me inside because she has raised me since I was two months and it hurts when I see her cry because most of my family is all locked up – like my older brother Roy and my sister – she is in CYA. My mom's in prison and she sees me taking the path they are taking but I really want to change cause she is sick and I'm tired of seeing my grandma hurting and sometimes she don't say nothing but I know that I caused her a lot of pain and that's all for now. To my brother Roy: I want you to know that I love you... Duh!

-Stephanie

From The Beat: If you want to stop your grandmother from hurting, what are you doing to get out of the Hall and change your life around? It seems like she does really love you and you are sensitive to her pain, so maybe it's time for you to make a change.

Oh Shhh!!!

What's cracking Beat? Well today I'm gonna go off topic. I'm gonna let you know some scary-ass shhh. Well here I go: The other day, just like any ole day in this messed up place we call J-Hall, I was in my room or cell whatever you want to call it, with my roommate or cell mate, and we both had just woke up. Some kids were watching Halloween and we heard the theme song. At that very moment, my room or cell started to shake lil by lil, faster and faster. Next thing I know I was shaking hella crazy. Everyone in our unit was going crazy. I ain't going to lie: I thought I was going to die. Then it just stopped. I will say it lasted about 30 seconds but it felt like forever as it happened.

Afterwards, everything was okay and everyone was calm. Counselors put the news on and they said it was a 5.6 earthquake. I think that's the biggest one I was ever in and it scared the shhh out of me. Well, that's it for today. Till next time - I'm out.

-Droopy G

From The Beat: Isn't it interesting how one's life flashes before one's eyes when our lives are in danger? It was a powerful earthquake, but at the same time it is kind of beautiful to think that the earth is a living thing moving beneath us.

The Hardest Day Of My Life

What's cracking to everybody - it's that one and only Chicano named Nemo. Well, today was a hard day for me because I had to tell my mom that my lady was pregnant. This was the hardest thing I ever had to do. Not only that, but I had to tell her in front of like six other people.

At first I really didn't want to do it but I realized I had to. It was hard for me to let it out but I did. My mom was hella surprised she started crying in front of my P-O and a couple other counselors. Seeing my mom cry made me want to cry, but instead I told myself I should be happy.

Another good thing is that my lady should find out November 2nd what were having. If we have a girl, we're planning on naming her after my mom. Well, I hope I did the right thing today. And I hope my mom is happy for me and my baby mama.

Well this Chicano gots to cut it here. To all who know me - stay up and stay strong. We'll get through these hard times. Alrato.

- Nemo

From The Beat: Having a child at a young age it a big challenge and your mother was probably just really worried for the future of you and your future child, but she's probably happy for you as well. Perhaps the big question for yourself is to figure out what you need to change to take care of this new person.

G.O.N.E.

Q-vole Beatsteros? Hows that vida loca treating you? Pues as for me this vato Pantera from Mountain View will be gone by the time you receive this piece. This is my last time here because I'm nineteen years young - record-cleared, no more probation. Ain't no more anyone telling me what to do.

Pues, I'd like to thank The Beat for your support. It's been nice of you vatos to show me something different in life, gracias. Pues, with that said, much love and respecto to all to all. Be smart 'cause this aint for ya'll... Alrato.

-Pantera

From The Beat: Thank you for your participation in our program and for your kind words. Good luck on the outs!

Look Out!

If I could chose an animal to best describe me, I would have to choose a Pit-bull because they are nice and loyal till they get triggered or have to defend themselves. I am a cool guy and am a truly loyal friend, but if you disrespect me or trigger me, I snap like a pit-bull and when I hit, I hit hard and fast and I don't stop till someone pulls me off. When I snap and am in a different mind, I'm not the same person and I sometimes black out and I've hurt people pretty bad like that. But what can I say? Don't mess with a notorious gangsta!

-Shy boy

From The Beat: Wow, the fact that you get so angry that you lose control of your body is a serious thing. Where do you think this anger comes from? You seem somewhat proud of it here, but maybe once you understand it more, you can take that intense power you have and transform it into something positive.

Years Past

Damn, the years that are in the past, what I have done. Man, I can't even think of where to start but I will. Well, in these past years, I have caused so much pain to my family, friends, enemies, and well, I got to admit that the person I have hurt the most is myself. I think the reason I hurt so many people was because I was the one in pain - so much of it that I had to release it somehow. So I started with the bad company at this time, but yes it's like other people say it is - the gangs and drugs.

Well thanks to me, myself, and ice - I am at the top of the food chain, speaking streetwise that is. I took so much pride and determination in the gang that I became really successful. And now the streets, hey well, what do you know, they love me. So yeah, well thanks to all this crazy ass shhh that has been happening over and over.

So, I'm looking forward to those years to come that I do my best and avoid the violence, gang, drugs and street life because I know that deep down inside of me that is "not" what I was meant to be. So I will try, and keep my word to myself and be successful in other, well positive things. Alrato!

- S

From The Beat: This is a powerful statement that you hurt others because you yourself are in pain. It's also interesting how you talk about being proud of your street skills - this pride is often dismissed but it's real.

Ms. Davis Is Like A Big Sis

Well Beat, today I feel like writing something that's been in my mind for a cool minute, okay? Let me see how can I start ... yup, I got it.

Since all the times I been in the hall not one staff would talk to me serious 'till I got sentence to hall time. That is where I meet her: Ms. Davis. So yeah, we got to talking. So what was different about her from other staff was that she'll ask me questions that other staff never did. So she got me thinking. So, I thanked her for that like I was her lil' bro'. Well that's the feeling I got from her that's why I think of her as a big sis. So thanks for opening my eyes Miss Davis, because if it wasn't for you, ma'am, I would of never figured out what I want to be in this life of mine.

By the way Id like to be a chef, or a cook, in other words. I love cooking, but anyways like I was saying - I thank this staff for all the advice that she gave me. So Ms. Davis, I am sorry for coming back to this place, but don't trip. I know what I have to do next time I am out this seat and done with my time - which is about to be done.

-PI

From The Beat: Well, we're sure Ms Davis would like to hear this from you, so hopefully someone makes sure that she sees this. Sometimes a little advice and inspiration is all it takes to turn one's life around.

I Miss Halloween

Mostly I go to parties, chillin' with my friends. We go trick or treating and we go around the block and havin' a good time and eat candy, and sometimes we get in fights with the other gangs and we, like, play fight. We listen to music all night, 'til midnight, then we throw eggs at the cops, when they go rollin' by, and at our rivals, and we steal people's candies, of people we don't like (our rivals.)

And then we sometimes go in the morning, walk around the block, and like to play games, like fight each other and drink vodka. We all get girls and drink with girls and we go dumb, get hyphy, get crazy, we start dancing to our favorite rappers and we represent our click and smash at suckas and live the vida loca, and RIP to the soldiers who are dead. Much love.

- Noe

From The Beat: It's too bad you'll miss Halloween, but then again, maybe you are not ready for this celebration! Sounds like for you this night is all about causing trouble. You do live the vida loca, but it also seems like there's a lot of sadness in what you write.

Been Pressured Before

Yes, I been pressured before. My cousin pressured me into smoking. Ever since then, I have been blowing big trees.

-Durell

From The Beat: Now that you realize that your cousin influenced you, can you rely on your own good judgment when you're free again?



Desperate

When I've been desperate, it was a sad part of my life. I've been desperate for love and was looking all in the wrong places. I look for it on the streets, drugs, and other bad places. I'm ashamed of what have done in desperate need on the street. Love is crap and I have learned no one loves me and never will.

-Lil' Mama

From The Beat: Would it help you to start out with friendships with guys your age, and see what develops naturally? Let guys come to you? Loneliness and desperation can be really scary. So do you know that you're cool whether you're on your own or not? Can you forgive yourself for whatever you've done in the streets? You have a sweet, good soul, and are enormously loveable. Can you hold out for respect from everyone? You deserve it.

My Love

You see the gleam in my eyes
Lookin' like I'm 'bout to cry
Every time you ride by
With your "new, improved" guy
I sit and ask God, "Why?"
I thought I hustled to survive?
That "all-American guy"
Took my spot in your mind
Some homies called it "soft"
How I was around you
To me it was the truth
No "gangsta" attitude
I remember your reaction
When you found my gun
Opposite of when I broke down
And cried in front of you
My boo
What I do

To deserve this fate?
Now, every time I see your face
I feel like a disgrace
Just another pawn in a forsaken rat race
I promise 'til the end
But can't seem to escape
I know you won't read this
But I'll always love you
Men know when they have a good thing
And don't ever make my mistake
And throw it away
If you got a girl you love
Stay out of jail!
Tell her you love her
Don't let the homies tell you what's "cool"
Love her!
Show her!

-Promise (to love you)

From The Beat: Did your messing up and going to juvy sabotaged your relationship with this young lady? When you're free again, you know what to do to never ruin a good thing again. The ball is in your court.

Stuck In This Cold World

Every time I see you, always got an attitude
What a ninja 'sposed to do, when I'm crazy over you?
Now that you' gone, I don't know what to do
I'm stuck in this cold world, thinkin' 'bout my boo

-Promise

From The Beat: You must be hurt and lonely, especially with the prospect of having to be without her, maybe forever. When you're free again, would it help you to go talk to her, get to know her again? Would an explanation help you, or only hurt you more?

Desperation Is This Nation

Desperation is this nation
And the state that it's been in
Do or die
When youngstas ride
That's the way our lives been
From the bottoms of the projects
To the top, where I found Zen
That's the hustlas' traditon
Hope I stop before the pen

-Promise

From The Beat: Can you describe in more detail what desperate state you believe the nation is in? What's causing the desperation? How does it affect you, personally? What can anybody do to improve it? What do you do, on the outs, to make our country better? Do you feel like you're desperate? If so, how?

They Called Me...

They called me Slim. I strolled the streets in my jeans and Timberlands. Got braids goin' down the back of my head. Had pockets filled up with bread and indo' in my shed. My clip was filled with lead. These are the tales: I am locked up, but not for drug sales. I had major clientele. But I gotta change my life because the things I am talking about just ain't right. I think I found God. I see the light.

-Christian

From The Beat: We don't know how much of this to believe, but we do know this is true: you are a very fine wordslinger. Keep writing.

Mike Here

Yup, it's me again, back for some dumb stuff I'm innocent of. But it's all good, ya know what I'm saying. If I go down for the homie, time goes on – just a small struggle in a long life.

-Mike

From The Beat: We think we know what you mean, but we don't enjoy the idea of you doing time for something you didn't do. How much is your time worth, Mike? What kind of a life do you want?

Who Am I?

I am a boy. That's who I was before I got locked up. Today I am still the same person I was when I got locked up. I don't think I have changed at all since I have been here. I know some people change, but I don't think I have. But I think I have learned a little more. But in saying that, I am still the same person.

-A Sixteen Year Old Boy

From The Beat: Dear Sixteen – we're glad that you have a strong sense of your identity. And we're glad you believe you've learned something from the experience of incarceration. According to the wiser among us, every human has three basic questions: Who am I? Why was I born? How long do I have? Sounds like you have a grip on the first question. Let us know if you have a clue about answers to the others.

I'm Gone

Well Beat Within, I'm leaving to ranch, next week, so this will be my last time writing for The Beat. I'm going to do my best to complete the program. Well, you already know what happened last time I said that.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Yeah, we do, but we hope this time it will be different. Good luck Kevin.

An Interview With Albert

Q: How's it been this week?

A: Good. I'm going to ranch camp.

Q: How has it gone with your writing and reading?

A: Nothing's happened. I have to be out of here before it happens. The judge found me guilty and it looks like ranch camo, or maybe a group home.

Q: So why is it going good?

A: I'm making it go good. I'm having a good time with my friends. I don't like it here but I can't do anything about it.

Q: What have you learned in the five weeks you've been here?

A: To be sober.

Q: If you were out on the streets, would you be sober?

A: I'd be drunk. I'm only sober because I'm locked up. But I do want to stay sober. I'm going to try to be sober.

-Albert

From The Beat: Regarding interviews, sometimes we run into a young person who's had difficulty learning to read and write. In those cases, we're happy to do an interview. We want everyone to have a voice.

Getting Out

I'm getting out
but I'm really not getting out.
I'm stuck in a ten-foot deep hole
and my only way out is gone –
will power.

My only way to get it back is... ?

-Gilbert

From The Beat: You have a fine mind. You can't give up. The world needs you. You're a natural resource. So, you fell down. The evidence is that folks who fall down don't have to stay down. It may take a few failures before you're really ready to get serious about your life, but the only way you'll really fail is if you quit.

The Highest Temptation

I'm bad on the street,
selling dope to get on my feet.
I'll cheat at any game.

I sell the same.

It's me. I'll get my way to fame
but the drug game is gettin' a little lame.

I have a little kid on the way.

I say what I say.

I used to smoke dank all day.

But I have to change my ways
as days go on. And my life.

It's getting a little shysty.

-C

From The Beat: We aren't impressed by your activities on the street, but we are concerned about how you're going to become a good father. You rightly point out that changes are in order. How will you make those changes? What's your plan? You need a reasonable plan that involves getting a decent education, maybe getting some help with drug and/or alcohol problems, (if you have that kind of issue to deal with), and, finding someone wise who can counsel you and just plain listen, when you need to talk.

The Elder Is My Mom

The special elder in my life is my mom. She shows me how to survive in this life. She tells me how to do good. She tells me to stay in school and to do good and to keep out of trouble. She wants me to graduate from high school and get all my credits. She's set a very good example for me, even though she didn't finish high school when she was young, because of the special situation she was in. She still went to school as an adult and graduated and got her high school diploma. That's why she is a special elder in my life.

-Buddha

From The Beat: Good reasons, every one. Now it's up to you to demonstrate that her wise words have helped you through your tough times. Time for you to act, to follow her good advice. Are you ready?

Number One

I am number one.

What does it take to be number one?

Three is always never remembered.

Two is never mentioned.

I am number one.

But I can't be number one
when I'm lost like a bum.

-Jon

From The Beat: You are Number 1 what....? We know one thing that you are certainly Number 1 at. You are, and always will be, Number 1 at being you. Nobody else comes close. Question is, what are you going to do with the one and only You who will ever exist on this or any planet. This is your life. This is your chance. You don't have to be "lost". You can find yourself. Maybe you need to find a bit of help. It's out there. And by the way – don't be so hard on "bums". They're folks who got a bit lost and haven't quite found themselves, yet.

The Highest Temptation In The Street

Violence is my biggest temptation. I will resist fighting so I don't come back in here. I will do that by not talking to people badly, and also, by not insulting people.

-Rodrigo

From The Beat: Good idea. Now, how will you get a handle on that temper? There are people who can help you learn to control your anger. Imagine if all that energy that's been going into anger could be routed to good things, good actions.

Ten Months

My name is David. They call me Big Puff. I liked this one girl. I went out with her in eighth grade. I thought she was fine because of the way she sounded on the phone. But I met up with her and she was fat, and she thought I would just walk away. But I went up to her and kissed her on her stomach and said: I love you. It's ten months later and now we have a kid.

-David

From The Beat: That's a heck of a story. You sound like a loving fellow. Obviously, you can't do much for your family while you're in the hall. So what are your plans? How will you straighten your life out? You have huge responsibilities, especially considering your age. We wish you good luck.

A Good Kid

I think I am a good kid. Others may think differently. But I am who I am. People are just going to accept it. I can get along with just about anyone. I also like to do things that will benefit myself, like working out, and working on cars and anything else that is productive.

-Anna

From The Beat: Well, you do sound like a good kid. So why the heck are you in juvy? What happened, Good Kid? Have you learned something valuable by being in the hall? If so, let us know.

In My Mind

I am one of the mood changing kids. One month I'm in a good mood. Then, for no reason, I feel like crap, not wanting to do anything but go insane in the membranes.

Now, I'm still in a goofy mood. I'm just the messed up kid you can't see.

-Mike

From The Beat: That's one of the reasons The Beat Within exists - to give you a presence, to provide you an opportunity to tell your story, to make it impossible for people who read The Beat to deny that you exist. We see you.

NEW MEXICO

The Real World

The craziest thoughts I could think of
Would probably push you over and leave your feet up
Turned up side down in this messed up place
And the words I say would leave your mouth wit a bad taste

Even though I talk real don't want to get killed

All I really want to do is get paid like a bill

Loss of days and loss of time

Being locked up will mess wit your mind

I'm feeling sorrow and I will tomorrow

Only way to end it is with a gun getting borrowed

- Canceled Identity

From The Beat: We at the Beat want to hear your words that will push us over and make us leave our feet up. Next time you write let us hear the story you are talking about. The one you did now was good, but we want to hear more.

Being Pressured

Just a couple weeks ago I was pressured into ditching school. I was pressured into doing it by two old homies I used to hang out with six years ago.

They told me if I didn't go they were going to get their homies to jump me.

The only thing that stopped me from saying "no" was because I didn't want to get jumped, and I was scared because you know the girls they hang out wit' are big and my heart went on poundin' hard.

So me like a stupid did it not knowing the consequences of doing it. I didn't get anything out of it just the fact that there isn't nothin' out there in the world happenin'.

I started trippin' when I found out what the consequences were, it was a warrant for my arrest, and I am locked up while those brothas are out there livin' it up, while I am in here with out any freedom and not seein' my mom.

- Crazy D

From The Beat: Sounds like you need to re-evaluate who your friends are. Your family and most of all your mom is there for you for life no matter what. Can you say the same for your "girls" or "homies"?

Past Years

In the past years

I have been robbing innocent people.

Hustling for drugs,

the worst thing, hurting the ones I love.

In the past years I have matured.

In the past years I have gotten so far in the work

I put in for my P-O

in the past years I have come a long way

from where I first started.

In the past years I have gotten really far.

- Travissa

From The Beat: It's good you have matured, with age that will happen as you grow older. Hustling and robbing is not a way of life, all that will get you is jail time or even death. Change now before it's too late.

Foggy Past Years

In the past years I didn't see so clear

I thought I had no fear,

I thought I had no pain

Instead the pain went to the one with the cane

Who was my father,

who was my only partner

He thought I was the one,

he saw me as his only son

He said I'll get through school,

until I got a new tool

I started acting a fool, when I started hustling

My father started wondering

where I got the new kicks

And paid to watch the Nicks,

then told me, who are you,

'Cause I got to do what I got to do

But look where I ended up

for telling my father 'shut-up'

It was my last words to him,

now I'm sittin' here missin' him

- King Henry

From The Beat: Now that you know the pain your father and you are going through, you must ask your self one question next time your out on the streets. Is it worth it?

Spare One Moment

Can we spare a moment of silence
For all the homies who died from gang-on-gang
violence?
For all the lil' girls who get raped
An' men who die in war?
For the women who sell they bodies to put food on the
table
Can we spare just a moment for change
For the thugs on the block sellin' dope to fiends
For the girls on the street who have no place to call
home
An' the ninjas out there beatin' on their foes
Can we spare a single moment for peace
For all the drive bys in the projects
An' the women who get abused
For the mommas out there who can't find they kids
An' the people in the world who don't know what life
they lead
Can we spare one more moment for life
For the people who made it through struggle and strife?
For the fiends in rehab
An' females gettin' jobs
For the people who made it with no help from home
Can we spare one moment?

-Kayos

From The Beat: Everyone is so caught up in their own lives that they don't take the time to spare one moment, so we're glad you are inspiring people to do so. If you were to spare one moment to help one person, who would you help? We know you can't help everyone overnight, so if you could help just one person, who would you help and why would you help them?

Desperate Times

Desperate times call for desperate measures
Locked away for claiming my hidden treasure
On that late-night hype
Tryna survive
Doing anything just to stay alive
I'm not proud of the things I've done
In desperate times
I didn't dream of becoming
Another statistic, committing crimes
I sold my soul
I'm not sure when
All I know is, I'll never be the same again
What is it that is boiling beneath the surface?
Causing me to snap
Inflicting pain on others on purpose
Desperation exposed me to a world of anger and tears
Bringing me closer
Stepping into my fears
Desperation caused me to lose my sense of self
Jail cost me any material wealth
Now I'm in desperate need of seeking mental health!
All in all, I've done my best
Even in times of desperation and stress

-Friskie

From The Beat: We know you all too well to think this is the end for you. For though you may feel desperate now, things will definitely get greater later. You have a heart made of gold and a personality that exceeds many others. So, when do you think you'll stop doing things that are destructive to you and start doing things that are beneficial to you? When will the Friskie we know has potential reveal herself?

That Animal

Caged Bird

Locked in a cage, dwelling in my rage
They've kept me from spreading my wings
But pretty soon I'll be free
I've been waiting for this day
Been waiting to fly away
I know I'm ready to soar, explore
And go through every open door
Waiting for freedom
I've sometimes wished God would just take me
To his kingdom
But tomorrow
I'm gonna spread my wings and fly
Fly so high
'Cause I've been yearning to reach the sky
No more tears, no more fears. Why?
'Cause I'm free, but I'm free, for reals
Ready to get my grown man on
It's something that I've really longed
This caged bird is ready to fly
Fly so high and reach the sky

-Short Cakes

From The Beat: Have you ever read "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou? Well, we hear the caged bird singing and it's a beautiful tune. You are already flying high, but when the handcuffs are removed the sky is definitely the limit. What do you plan on doing when you get out and spread your wings?

United We Stand, Divided We Fall

Society has been formed by the white man. The rich people with power on top of the social stratification table mold the laws and rules to benefit themselves and not worry about everyone else. Survival of the fittest. If we don't even care about ourselves to "stay out of trouble," and do "what's right." Why should anybody on top with power worry about something they don't have to deal with, while my people kill themselves in the streets for their cause, the rich people just live in the hills. Only worrying about the next million dollar suit they gonna wear. If only one person cares, maybe a difference can be made. Good vs. bad is what it comes down to. Everyone knows, good is supposed to win. If you believe in God, that's his side. Revelations tells us at the end He will save those who are "worthy." But we livin' hell on earth and the "good" that's out there right now is getting bombed on. Those in need almost seem hopeless...

Everyone ain't gonna follow God. That's just the way it is. Maybe a leader is necessary. United we stand, divided we fall. As humans, we are born to fail. Even when someone is in a "gang," nowadays the leaderships is missing. This generation is going down the drain. We shouldn't be afraid to find ourselves a positive or even negative role model. Not everyone can be a leader.

I've been taught to deviate from the law. This writing shhh is kinda hot. Freedom of speech? Yeah, right. I've let society put me on a leash, but I ain't never been one to be tamed. My mind wandered a bit too much. I went from one point to the next. I control myself, observer, and pick and choose what I want to put myself through.

-Old Grandpa Man

From The Beat: You are definitely wise beyond your years and it shows through your incredible thoughts. Knowing what you know about what's going wrong, do you have any other solutions to the problem besides everyone following one leader? Do you think things will ever change or do you think we're doomed and from here on out there's nothing we can do but accept it?

I Found My Inspiration

I found my inspiration
 In my past and in my heart
 To be there for my sister
 A dream within my heart
 Waiting to be fulfilled
 I swear I will
 I must, I must
 Nothing will stop me now
 My best, well, it was not enough
 Better I'll have to do
 Sheer force of will, will get me by
 And feed my body and my mind
 I'll make it out
 I really will
 I'll never let you down
 Don't forget about me
 I won't of you
 I miss you so
 Sister
 I miss you, Carolyn
 I'm sorry I wasn't there for you

-Kage

From The Beat: Having a sister to look after is a very mature thing to be inspired about. From your experiences, what could you teach her about herself? How do you think your incarceration is affecting her? What's the first thing you want to do with your sister once they finally let you out?

I am now sitting in jail regretting everything I did every day and wish I would have listened to my pops, because everything he said was going to happen, happened.

Desperate Times Call For Desperate Measures

Desperation every single day
 Can't seem to feel any other way
 Once again staring at these white walls
 Walking down these dark halls
 So desperate to be free
 That God can't even help me

But once I'm out, the feeling is back
 Is there something I lack?
 Desperate for food
 Desperate for a home
 Desperate for someone lucky
 To love and hold

Standing on street corners or sellin' drugs
 Sometimes I just want to give them a hug
 Because their desperation took them that far
 Took them beneath the ground, beneath the tar
 Of these desperate times
 That call for desperate measures

-Charms

From The Beat: Wow! We really enjoyed this poem because you mapped out exactly what it means to feel desperate. And more often than not, desperation is an awful feeling. What do you think you can do to ease yourself from these desperate feelings? Have you ever felt as desperate as you feel now? If so, how did you deal with it then?

Desperation An' Depression

I feel desperate to leave
 I feel desperate when I think about me being pregnant in here
 I feel depressed doing the same thing day after day, 24/7
 I feel depressed when I think of how my mom cries for me
 I feel depressed because I'm missing my second half
 I feel desperate to know what is going to happen
 I look around and see more depressed faces around me
 I think about the choices I've made in the past
 My feelings in here go from happy to mad
 Just like a clown, from a smile to a frown
 Smile now, but later I cry
 I just want time to go by

-Loka

From The Beat: Damn, that's hellia sad that you are pregnant while incarcerated. That would make us feel desperate too. From your experience with where you are, what will you be able to tell your child so that he or she won't follow the same path? And do you think you could take heed to the advice you would give your child?

Keep Your Head Up! Mom, I Love You

Keep your head up... hmmm. I like that word. That word seemed to keep me going. You know... I came from a crack head father and a confused mother. My life wasn't easy, but it wasn't that bad. For the most part, my parents tried to keep me and my siblings away from bad people and bad places. I appreciate that.

But eventually they separated and it was me and my mom against the world. We left my father and my other siblings in Sacramento, as we headed back to the bay. We left with the clothes on our backs and barely any money. I couldn't imagine how my mom felt, having to struggle to keep me off the streets... but we always told each other, "Keep your head up."

We came from nothin' to something from the love for each other. To struggling people, "Keep you heads up!" Even if me and my mom fight, we keep our heads up and get through our problems. You can do the same! I love you, mom aka Donut! Thanks.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: It must be nice to know that your mother will go to any length to see her daughter safe. Do you feel lucky to have a mother like yours? It's unfortunate that your dad isn't in your life anymore. If you were to see him today, what would you say to him? Do you think you'll ever get the chance to tell him how his actions affected you and your mother?

Soon I Was Over My Head

In the past years, I've managed to mess up my life. School was a no-no and selling and using drugs was the thing. I told myself I would only mess with weed, but that soon turned into pills, coke, and you know the rest.

I started pushing hellia weight, and was soon in over my head. My parents didn't know what happened to their son, and I didn't know what happened to myself. I got into the mode of "I don't give a damn about anything." I stole a 5.0 and caught a case for GTA.

I am now sitting in jail regretting everything I did every day and wish I would have listened to my pops, because everything he said was going to happen, happened.

-Lost Cause

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that many of us have to actually go through something in order to realize how much we don't want to go through it. But keep in mind, many people go through this and come out triumphant on the other side. Do you think you've realized your pops wants the best for you? How does this change your view towards him?

What If You Were Never Innocent?

How can you lose innocence if you have never really had it? If from birth you had hardship, pain, cruelty, poverty, and abuse... how can you say you have ever been innocent?

What is innocence anyway? The lack of pain in your life? The lack of knowledge of pain in your life, or just the lack of knowledge of pain in general? If that's the case, then one can never truly be innocent. There is always pain, always hardship, and nothing can ever change that. There is no such thing as a life without pain and if someone tells you otherwise, they are lying. We all, at one point in our lives, envy those who we think have perfect lives. But no matter how good we think they have it, there is always something

they would change if they had the chance. They all have that pain that they keep hidden.

Even as little kids, we see our share of pain and cruelty. Kids are cruel, that's the saying, right? It's true. Maybe it's not the cruelty we see on the news or the pain of war refugees, but does that make it any less important? We are never truly innocent and we shouldn't try to be. Because if we are innocent, we are blind to the pain of the world, and it hurts that much more when it gets us.

-Joshua

From The Beat: Besides being a first-rate writer, you are also a philosopher. The question of what is innocence has been asked by philosophers from every age. Isn't birth itself a searing experience — from the safety of our amniotic fluid existence into free fall in the world— making the loss of innocence the very first event in each of our lives?

You Said

You said you would wait for me 'til I get out.
You said you loved me with all your heart.
You said, no matter what, our love would be for real
And nothing would change.
You said you wanted a family from me
And to grow old together.

And now I finally get a letter from you
After being locked up for a month.
You saying that you' not strong to wait fro me.
You saying you wanna move on
'Cause you can't bear being by your lonesome
And that I wasn't with you during your hard times
'Cause I was locked up.

Now let me ask you something, mija?
Where are you during my hard times?
Being locked up like an animal
For something I did for you.
And now you leave me
With nothing but words in my mouth
And a broken heart.

-Sancho

From The Beat: We usually don't give love poems the designation of Piece Of the Week, but your pain was expressed with such understatement ("words" in your mouth and "a broken heart"), your passion is as hot as a branding iron! We cannot lay blame (for the question must be asked: who left whom first?), but we can recognize fine poetry when we find it, especially fine poetry as powerful as this is.

Technical Difficulties

These topics seem a bit repetitive and dull. I've lived through this dead end life and seen the insanity of it all, but still I have an issue with doing something about it. When out in the streets, I've felt the extreme sense of euphoria offa that good ol' Snapper. But then a year and a half of my life was spent on incarceration. Hitting the 'hood after doing that change locked up had me almost seeing things through different eyes.

The streets kept calling me, but they spoke a different language, something I don't understand. I no longer patrolled the 'hood for the rush and excitement, but because I felt obliged to my duty to something I was born into.

Right now I sit here and absorb it all. I'm not too sure what to make of it. Without toxins and chemicals in my mind, the world is something else—not better nor worse, just different.

Distractions. My mind is facing technical difficulties at the moment.

-Old Grampa Man

From The Beat: Boy, if this is an example of your mind facing technical difficulties, we'd love to see an example of it functioning at its best! What we actually see is a mind in movement, a questioning of accepted dogma, a shaking up in which the chips have not all yet fallen. And it is exciting to be given a glimpse into this mental process (that too few ever experience). What happens when love of oneself (love of one's freedom to live a unique life) comes into conflict with love of one's cause (however it's defined)?

Worse Off Than Me Is She

I see them crying out from pain
I hear their screams
But, I can do nothing
The cries, their cries
Pierce through the barriers around
my heart

Their voice
It follows me in my head
My thoughts turn to her
Alone in her bed
I know I can help
They make the way hard
Fighting to do what is right
Against what is supposedly just

I say her of course
I know I can help her
Maybe not them all

But her, her I can help

I pine for her
And I see
She is truly worse off than me
She lost her folks, you see
I, well, I have family
She has no one to love her
Only people she can try to love
Who cannot, or sadly will not

I'll pray and wait
'Til I can help
Those who wish to be free
Still same
For until then
They aren't all they can be
I'll wait and watch
When the time is right
I'll play my part

And play it well
To help those worse off than me
We share a place
This dismal hole
Until we are all set free

At last my roll fulfilled
I walk into the twilight
I can only hope
Well, that she might join me
That we might bless each other

Blessed and cursed
That is me

-Kage

From The Beat: We do not know your curses, Kage, but your blessings are obvious: a talent for putting words to paper to express thoughts that probe beneath the surface. Whatever the screams that follow you in your head may represent, they are part of a sharp and sharpened mind, which can feel like a curse when, in truth, it's a blessing.

This I Swear

I

I pray
Not for me
But for her
I am nothing
Those I love
They are everything

II

A soul out of its time
Understood by few
Yet noticed by all
He weeps for all of them
Moved by emotion
Too strong for the heart to hold

III

He holds his breath
Hoping, wishing, praying
And, yet, he is alive
It is so that he can serve
Not truly selfless

Yet a shining star in the darkness
The darkness in the mind of a
madman

IV

Yes, love conquers all
Yet, when love falters
In the vice of temptation
The darkness begins to swallow me
I am the light in the picture
It is my eternal soul
My glorious, beating heart
Being swallowed by my mind of evil

V

I cry for help
I am blessed and cursed
To be able to help others
And yet not myself
And yet able to see my faults
I swear to grow,
Be a role model for those I love
My sister, Carolyn

And those that cry out in pain

VI

I will grow into something
Something to be proud of
I won't fail
This I swear
I'll stand with you all
All those I love

VII

Until then, I'm a shadow
A shadow of my former self
A Kage
A shadow
Farewell

-Kage

From The Beat: But if you are "nothing" then how can you value anything? Or, put another way, why would what you value be worth anything if you yourself were not worth valuing? No, dear Kage, you are very far from nothing. You are something, very vital, very much alive. But don't fall for the temptation that you can take on the world's pain (or, at least, your own world's) without addressing your own.

Adulthood

Anxiously anticipating my
release date
I can't wait
The future is here
I've overcome tha last
seven years
No more crying or
shedding tears
The time has come
For me to face my fears
This is my reality
No more avoiding
The person in tha mirror
This is me
This is who I've come to be
Now almost free
All I gotta do
Is trust and believe
In my own strength and
power
That carried me through
My loneliest of hours
I guess you could say
I'm resilient
Not quite brilliant
However, I learned to never
abandon or neglect
My intellect
My intuition
No more placing myself
In compromising positions
As long as I'm on this
earth
I must put my well being

first

And ponder
What can I do
To become a woman of
honor?
As adulthood approaches
And my childhood begins
to disappear
I see my future
As I embark on my career
I know ahead
There will still be rainy
days
The world isn't changing
Only my ways
In this moment of clarity
Everything makes sense
I can see it clearly
No longer bleak and dense
Becoming an adult
Isn't as bad as it once
seemed
My childhood prepared me
To face the obstacles
Standing between me
And achieving my dreams

-Friskie

From The Beat: Wow, Friskie. Sometimes you say things that make us stand aside and marvel at the adult you are turning into right before our eyes. If you can truly see the difficulties you've survived as preparing you for the responsibilities of adulthood, then your future is as bright as you foresee it to be. You've described moving into this world as well as any description we've ever read.

The 'Hood

They got a ninja shedding tears
Reminiscing on my past fears
'Cause shhh was hectic for me last year
It appears that I've been marked for death
My heartless breath the underlying cause
Of my arrest
My life is stressed
And no less forever weary
My eyes stay teary
For all the brothers that are buried in the cemetery
Shhh is scary
How black on black
Crime legendary
Teardrops and closed caskets
The three strikes law is drastic
And certain death for us ghetto bastards
What can we do when we're arrested
But open fire
Life in the pen ain't for me
'Cause I'd rather die,
But don't cry through you' despair
I wonder if the Lord still cares
For us ninjas on welfare
And who cares if we survive
The only time they notice a ninja is when he's clutching on
a four-five
My neighbor ain't the same
'Cause all these little babies going crazy
And they suffering in the game
And I swear it's like a trap
But I ain't givin' up on the 'hood
It's all good
When I go back
Beezies showin' me love
Ninjas finin' me props
Forever hop
'Cause it don't stop

-Twin

From The Beat: You write with a certain desperation, as if wishing your life were a fantasy doesn't change its reality. Perhaps "ghetto bastards" does describe a group of nearly forgotten children. But as each child grows into adulthood, he or she has to make choices that be classified as responsible or irresponsible. We hope you find more choices than the limited alternatives you present here.

To My Homie, Pato

Pato tell my jefes
 I apologize for all the pain and sorrow
 They won't see me back tomorrow
 Tell my carnalitas and jefita not to worry
 That I seen another life through the night
 Eyes blurry
 Tell my jaina that I love her
 Don't tell her I was crying
 Make her think I wasn't tripping
 Even though she knows you're lying
 My lil' kid, damn, I wish that I can kiss him
 I'm not doing this to dis him, dog
 I'm really going to miss him
 But today and here now not a bula older
 Get this weight off my shoulder
 There's nothing better
 Then what's less
 I wasn't living, dog
 My heart was beating dead inside my chest
 But I guess
 I get to rest
 So peaceful in my coffin
 Sabes que I'm finished talking (Blam)
 To my familia and my ruca
 I love you

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: Damn, it must be difficult to have all those people needing you around while you're locked up, especially your child. If you had to choose between your family and your homies, what would you choose? Do your actions reflect that?

Open Your Eyes

Sometimes I hear a lot of people complain about how bad their lives are. You know, I used to be like that. I used to sit there and ask God, "Why me?"

Now that I'm older, I realized there are way too many people in the world who has it way worse than I do. You see... when most teens get in the stubborn mood, they tend to forget about homeless people in other countries, and even homeless people in front of our eyes.

I'm way too ungrateful, but I try my hardest to be the best that I can. When the road gets bumpy and I'm feeling down, I'll try to remember those who have it worse than me and pray for them. You should, too. Don't take life for granted, and stay out the system.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: There's wisdom seeping from every angle of this piece. Do you find that remaining aware of the fact that there are people out there who have it worse than us helps you deal with your own situation better? Or does knowing there are people suffering more than us make it worse?

These Are My Years

In the past I've hurt so many people that I can't even remember. But the one thing I do remember is when I hurt the most important people to me in my life — my family and my girl.

When I hurt my parents in the past, is when I used to gangbang or run the streets like crazy. I just wish that I could buy or build a time machine so I can go back in time to change my mistakes and fix all the errors in life.

Also, for the last two years, I've hurt my girl so many times. So by getting locked up, I just added another point to her disappointment list, so that's if you really love somebody, then show them you care about them and about yourself, too. Don't let the past come back and haunt you.

-Bruce

From The Beat: You've learned a very valuable lesson. Do you think you would have learned this without being incarcerated? Do you also feel like you hurt people because you were hurt in some way? We really appreciate your honesty and maturity, however, we don't want you to get too down on yourself because everybody from all walks of life makes mistakes. At least you learned from yours...

It Chose Me

Wishing I could rewind time
 Maybe things wouldn't be like this
 People swear they know me an' feel my pain
 Ha, ha, that's funny, 'cause you the one
 That brought me this great pain
 Been abused and used
 But I refuse to lose
 This game I been playing
 Is a game that is impossible to beat
 I try an' try an' keep falling
 As tears come slow down my eyes
 I can't stand these flashbacks
 Why can't I just live a normal life?
 Why did I have to grow up
 And be faced with this corrupted world?
 My heart bleeds at all times
 Even when I smile, I'm crying in the inside
 I'm empty
 I'm like a mirror that has been broken many times
 So many years
 I'm young but my mentality is far from dumb
 I been through worse than you can imagine
 I don't choose this, it chose me

-Giggles

From The Beat: We can tell that you are wise beyond your years with this piece of writing. For though we should take responsibility for our actions, there are other factors like environment and how we were treated in how we act today. What are some of major experiences you've had that molded you into who you are today? If you were able to choose, what would your life have looked like?

Tommy Gun

Tommy gun is handsome in his own sinister way
 He attracts glamour girls and pistol play
 His lifestyle will scare a square half to death
 Not ready to yield his thuggin', God bless his Teflon vest

Gangster in his mind, saturated with a life of crime
 Don't blame mama, blame daddy, 'cause he didn't invest any time
 Ecstasy was his choice of drugs
 The beezie made him spit devil slugs

He thrived on killing his own kind
 Self-hate has got the black man blind
 Tommy was ignorant to karma and universal order
 Impeachment was his process, and death was over his shoulder

His agility to dodge bullets while standing in the shadow of death
 Made his allies become foes, 'cause they knew where Tommy's gun rest

Aptitude for leaving the game was bright as the summer's day
 Yet that man killed
 Son gunned him down wit' an AK
 It is sad, still I could shed a crocodile tear
 The dead will bury the dead, and it's been this way for years

-Twin

From The Beat: This is a perfect testament to that saying, "Live by the gun, die by the gun." How do you feel about people killing their own people, or simply hurting their own people? It's a shame but doesn't it happen all the time? How does one leave such a life alone before something tragic happens like it did for Tommy Gun?

In The Past Years

The past years, my family gone through a lot of pain while I was growing up gangbanging. My family shed so many tears while I was doing my stupidity, getting locked up. They thought I didn't love them, but they were wrong.

Now I'm trying to change my life so my family don't think I don't love them and think I don't care about them. Try to stop with the hatred I have with others and prove to my family that I could change for them.

-Rambo

From The Beat: It is very honorable of you to want to change for your family, but what if your family just wants the best for you? In the end, wouldn't long term happiness for you also equal long term happiness for them?

Lil' Sis

I am locked own as we speak, because I was not thinking about my lil' sis. I told my lil' sis, "I will not go back to jail." I looked into her pretty lil' eyes and told her, "No." When I think about that, that shhh hurts, man, fa real.

Think I am a punk? What I am not but a man with feeling? Yes. Everyday that goes by, I look back to everybody's faces. When I got out last time, love, joy, happiness, everything but my lil' sis's eyes had more to them than that. She had stress, pain, because I lied to her face and it hurt because Halloween is her birthday and it's been four that I missed and I can't get away for her eyes sayin' to me, "I still love you. Try harder, big brother."

-Mr. Kabb

From The Beat: It must be difficult for a lil' girl to not have her older brother around for her birthdays and we can tell it's eating you up inside. How will you remember the feeling of not being able to comfort your little sister once you've finally gotten out? Do you think you'll forget how much it hurt not being there for her?

A Lion

If I could be an animal, I would be a lion, because I am a leader and I am strong. When I get under stress, I can handle it and I am on top of things, watching my surroundings.

-David

From The Beat: Lions are magnificent creatures who've conquered the jungle. Have you conquered the jungles that are going on within you?

In The Past Years

I was with my family for Halloween and I don't want to be here. I want to be thirteen years old, so I can be with my family. I love my family.

-Payasito

From The Beat: The holidays must be hard to deal with when you're incarcerated. Have you told your family how you feel? What do they say about where you are?

I'll Be A Wolf

If I was an animal, I'll be a wolf, because they are powerful because they got strong jaws and they do smart things to kill their prey.

-Ochoa

From The Beat: A lot of animals have strong jaws and do smart things to kill their prey, so what else sets aside wolves from other animals?

I'm A Snake

I'm a snake
With plenty more features
That has wished for a better future
A snake that is grimy
To anybody that crosses me
I have no mercy for liars
I'm a snake that wants revenge
To all the fakes that bump into my lane
I'm a faithful snake
Loyalty is my favorite word
'Cause if it's not included, I don't want it
Snakes are fast
An, yes, we hold grudges
Against the ones that has put us to shame
Snakes are real fierce
An' besides being all of the above
They get a lot more...

-Giggles

From The Beat: We've never heard of a loyal and faithful snake, so hearing that was interesting. In what ways are you loyal and faithful? Are you strictly talking about romantic relationships or are you also loyal and faithful to your family?

Wolf

If I were an animal, I would be a wolf — they're loyal and they prove it by staying in packs. They catch my eye. They're different. I just really like them.

-Wicked

From The Beat: Loyalty seems like a big thing for you. Do you think you're loyal to your family when you choose the homies over them?

Dreams

As I close my eyes
The first thing that I see is you
How your smile
Brightens up your entire face
Just to bring back
Your touch, your smell, your warmth
Damn
As I go into a deep sleep
I can feel your hands
Moving up and down
Not finding their favorite place
As I turn to my left
I can bring back your smell
My mouth gets all watery
While I recall it
The sheets that cover me
Help me get warm
Forcing my body
To feel something that's not even real
How I wish this wasn't no dream
Only in my dreams
Is where I keep you being real
Until then
I'll see you in my dreams

-Brownie

From The Beat: Dreams can take us to a place that we yearn for. Do you have any dreams for just yourself that don't include anyone else? Or does the person you speak of have such power over you that the only life you see is with them?

Sick And Tired

Damn, I've been on the run and I'm 'bout to go back to my rehab. While I was out, I stayed in the 'hood.

My homegirl is pregnant and still hittin' the C-pipe
Another homegirl got popped in the back by some suckas, in the back, too.

Homie Cruz killed over a broad
While I was out there, I had to get back on line. I wasn't happy like I thought I was. I guess 'cause my cutty, Giggles, ain't there with me. I don't know, I've given up dating. I'm hoping not to bury another homie or a family member. City life. I can't love the 'hood, but at the same time, I'll never hate it. Mission district. It's sad, but you'll see me.

-Wicked

From The Beat: If you're so sick and tired of what's going on, why do you continue to go on? Do you think you'll be gang-banging forever? If so, why? If not, what will it take for you to stop?

I'm The Only One Changing

This past year's been all bad. Lots of homies dying, getting locked up. But the world still the same. New people on the block, New knocks. While the homies catchin' new cases. Lookin' back, I'm the only one changing.

Getting locked up, going to different placements, camps, group homes. I'm just learning, learning like everyone else that gets locked up, because probation says we might change. Before I caught a case, I was a normal human in society. But now, because of my record, in school, on the streets, I'm a monster. I'm looked at as a monster when I go to school, try to apply for a job.

-Smokey

From The Beat: We understand you may have made a mistake but don't you think there were many people who were locked up that became successful. If you could sit down and talk to those people who view you as a monster, what would you say? How would you convince them that you are still that normal human being you were before you got locked up?

I Hear My Parents' Voices

In the past few years I have caused a lot of pain to a lot of my family members, especially my mom and dad. They were very disappointed when I went to jail and I could hear their voices.

-Jesse

From The Beat: When you heard their voices, what were they saying? Do you feel bad for not listening to them in the first place? What can you do to regain their confidence in you?

Reaching Out

Dedicated to JR
 You are so intelligent
 Seem so confident
 Your beautiful face
 Shouldn't be in this place
 When you get out
 You better do good
 Take care of business
 Like you should
 You articulate yourself so well
 Your words got me
 Under a spell
 I admire your wisdom
 I admire your strength
 I listen when you speak
 And believe in how you think
 So far away
 Yet at arm's length
 Believe in yourself
 And your inner power
 Know that I'm here for you
 Even in your loneliest hour
 You don't really know me
 But I want you to see
 The positive effect
 You've had on me

-Friskie

From The Beat: What a beautiful thank you to someone who's had an impact on you. The greatest thanks of all would be seeing you get your act together and never giving up your freedom again.

My First Cigarette Butt

The first bad thing that I can think back at what I did was when I was little, probably four or five, when me and my cousin that was younger than me had picked up a cigarette butt and lit it up and smoked it. My cousin and I seen my dad do it before. I'm now choking off the smoke and ran to get something to drink. I think that's why I don't smoke now.

-Ethan

From The Beat: Probably everybody has a story about that first choking experience smoking, but only a few of us were wise enough to avoid the habit. Good for you!

*I admire your wisdom
 I admire your strength
 I listen when you speak
 And believe in how you think*

It's Not A Game

Why haven't you made time to write?
 Is this all about spite?
 Making me cry
 As I go to sleep each night?
 Every day I wait for a letter
 That never comes
 What could I have done?
 You say you love me
 But where have you gone?
 I haven't heard from you
 In hella long
 Is something wrong?
 Baby, I need you
 Especially at this time
 While I sit in jail
 For committing this crime
 Are you quick to forget me like that
 At the drop of a dime?
 When together we are able to shine
 Please say you're still mine
 Remember there's no mountain
 We can't climb

-Friskie

From The Beat: As great as the comfort love can provide, you have to find some comfort in yourself, unattached to anyone. If you tie your well being to your reflection in someone else's eyes, you're setting yourself up for disappointment.

*I haven't heard from you
 In hella long
 Is something wrong?*

Don't Follow Your Brother Or Us

I remember one time at a family party, everyone was talkin' about my brother—how they missed him, 'cause he's locked up in prison, doing seven years. Then my uncles start talkin' to me, sayin', "Drew, stay out of trouble. I hear stories about you and the things ya been doing." My uncle said, "Don't follow your brother and our footsteps, because if any of the family see you or your mom see you one day go there, it'll kill her inside," because I'm the last boy she has left to love.

-Drew

From The Beat: Keep your momma proud!

Love Is A Fatal Attraction

Love is a fatal attraction
 A legit distraction
 The temptation to be in your arms comes and goes
 I love you, but I can't stand your ways
 I know I love you, but at times, I hate loving you
 Love can be a good thing or a very bad thing
 You fall head over heels
 You fall hard, or you play da pretend role
 It's a beautiful feeling when you're feeling is true
 But when it's not, it's bad
 If you walk right I walk into a brick wall
 An' if I walk left, I walk into a sharp blade
 Either way, my heart bleeds
 I'm stuck
 Love has brought me no kind of luck
 I don't understand
 I always felt if you're in love for real
 You wouldn't feel da need to cheat
 An' meet da next an' feel da need to beat
 It's a game—either you play it or not
 You win or you lose
 You da heart-breaker
 Or you the one with da broken heart
 No man is worth your tears
 An' da one dat is won't make you cry
 Love is special, I mean, it's supposed to be
 If not, then something is definitely wrong
 Be careful who you catch feelings for
 It's touch being in love
 An' you know it can never be
 'Cause you too scared to take a risk
 Life is a risk
 Point blank!

-Giggles

From The Beat: If the moral of this poem is, "Be careful who you catch feelings for," we entirely agree. But having feelings for another person automatically opens you up for their pain, but also for their pleasure and joy.

Tired Of Running

I am scared of my enemies, but I keep hangin' out with my homies, just to fit in, but they are always punking us around. I am always the first one to run, because we know that they have more power than us. For example, the other day I was walking to class and they came up to me and slapped me. I ran to the staff. I run pretty fast, so that's good. I'm tired of gangbanging, so I want to quit.

-Chucky

From The Beat: There are many different groups you can choose to fit in with, but sometimes you have to go looking for them. What steps can you take to disengage from gang activity, and start living a different kind of life?

Forgotten Memories

Forgotten memories is all dat is left
Tears dat aren't drippin' anymore
Don't even remember da last laugh
I'm a stranger to my own smile
I'm a number dat has been put in a green file
Years pass by an' da system won't let me go
I hardly remember what it is to be living
Late night hypes, day light interactions
I wish I have more good memories
I feel like I lost my mind
As I blow purps, I try to find
Dat I been feed all these years
Confused, not wanting to let go
Of what's left of my good memories
I'm mad, because they all seem to fade away
An' become forgotten memories

-Giggles

From The Beat: You have given up a lot of what should have been a real childhood, but you have a lot more ahead of you. Of course you're confused. Only a fool wouldn't be confused in this world. But don't let a little doubt keep you from doing the things you know you must (and not doing the things you know you mustn't) to keep yourself free and your life moving forward. Your memories are not forgotten. Now is the time to build new ones.

When I Lost My Innocence

I think that I lost my innocence when I first went to juvy. I feel like dat, 'cause after I got out, I saw and felt da changes around me. My moms started showing me tough love. My grandparents started lecturing me a lot, talking 'bout I'm slippin' away to da streets. My bras from da jets started giving me more respect, 'cause the first time I went to da halls was 'cause I was holdin' down da block wit' da big homies. Dat's when I lost my innocence and why.

-Young Phil

From The Beat: Was the "respect" you picked up from your boys on the street worth the loss of respect from your moms and grandparents?

He got down on his knees and started praying and then he took a piece of paper out of his pocket and he wanted me to read it. It said, "I'm sorry I can't talk. The war made me go crazy."

Trying To Stay Alive

Every day I keep on running and running, 'cause I see them coming and coming. I'm all tweaked out, knowing they gon' kill me. I try not to get smashed on by one of them, 'cause my enemies got more power than I do, so I bow down to them and not mess around with them, 'cause I know we'll end up six feet underground. I no longer bang.

-Pato

From The Beat: Sometimes, the smart thing to do is to cut your losses and just walk away. During the Vietnam War, one Senator suggested that we announce that we've won, and leave! Maybe it's only when you leave that you can win.

The Past Rolled Up

Life is hard, but it's worth living for. Me, I had it good. I was graduating from high school and making it as a youth, 'til one night the gang task force rolls by and pulls me out of my mom's car, asks me some questions, takes me to the station, and I got shhh put on me that I didn't do, and was not present for it.

-Kenny

From The Beat: We have no reason to doubt you, and can only hope that the system will find its error and let you go. At the same time, we have friends who are still sitting in prison even though they didn't do what they were convicted of doing. Could this be karma? Have you gotten away with other dirt, only to pay a price for dirt you didn't do?

I Want To Stay Out Of Trouble

I got five more days and I can't wait 'til I'm out. I miss my family and they can't wait to see me. When I get out, I just want to do the right thing and stay out of trouble. When I get in trouble, I feel like I let my family down, so all I want to do is respect my parent and grandparents when I get out on Wednesday.

-Patrick

From The Beat: Good for you, Patrick. But what does "do the right thing" mean to you? We hope it means finishing your education, because that's the key to doing the right thing for the rest of your life. Good luck.

I Miss You

I miss you
Who could make me feel the way you do?
Only you
My heart beats thinking of you
You didn't lie
Was so sweet to me every time
My face shined being with you
I miss you
One kiss from me to you
I got tied up with the wrong people
I know your heartaches from being
Without you
Why did I do this to you?
I knew what would happen
I disappointed you
I can't wait for the day
Me and you can be together again
Baby, I miss you
And I know you miss me, too

-Sybreea

From The Beat: We can understand why you can't wait for that day you'll be together again. But what we want to know is what you will do the day after that? And the next day after that?

An Act Of Kindness

One time I was in Pittsburg, visiting my uncle and three of my cousins. I also brought two of my friends with me. So after a while of just sitting at my uncle's house, we decided to go get something to eat. We went to Burger King and while I was eating my meal, a guy walked in the store. But he looked real hurt and hungry, and he also looked tore up.

So after I ate, I kind of felt bad for him so I went up to him and gave him a dollar. He got down on his knees and started praying and then he took a piece of paper out of his pocket and he wanted me to read it. It said, "I'm sorry I can't talk. The war made me go crazy."

-Peter

From the Beat: What an interesting story this is! How did it make you feel when you read the man's note? Did you think about him in war?

Friend

Damn, gave my homie ninety days for domestic violence.
I try to picture myself in his position, but remain silent.
I get to thinking 'bout the shhh. We been too close like kin,
but you remain my friend, to this life of sin,
Done got the both of us in trouble,
but you always stay down for a ninja, so that's why I love you.
Reminisce
Needin' tissues
Fightin' over childish issues
Swear I can't live wick you
But wi'tout you
Every day I miss you
When we roll
You hold my pistol
My gangsta sista
You in the mood for love
That's why I'm sleepin' wit' you
Though not the man of you dreams
My plan and schemes
To be rich, like a king
And live my life trouble-free
I see yesterday I called you names
And played games on yo' mind
I promise that I'll change in time
It's a complicated world
So, girl, just be a friend
I swear, I'm never leave you
On your own again
And that's my word

-Twin

From The Beat: Well, Twin, we understand why you want her to stick around on the promise that you'll change. But, putting ourselves in her shoes, we've heard that promise before. How will you replace these hopeful words with hopeful deeds?

A Place Of Disrespect

I was raised in a place that was full of hate, just because. I was raised a few blocks away, so I learned a lot of bad things. My mom and dad were always at work and never had time to go to a fun place. But I don't blame the place that I was raised or my mom or dad. It was my choice to say yes or no.

I thought it was fun to break a bat on someone's head, just to earn some respect. Now I'm in this place full of disrespect, wearing and smelling other people's things just for making a wrong mistake.

-Lil' Sala

From The Beat: You made the choices, yes, but you had been given only a limited number of alternatives to choose from. Now that you're older and more mature, you are able to see other possible choices you could make so that your future is not "this place for of disrespect."

Life is a Shame

Life is a shame
Each and every night
People gettin' taken out of da game
Left and right
Every day is a fight,
Scratch that — it's a war
People are rotten to the core
Whether you're rich or poor
You want more
Whether it's money or another puff
You just can't get enough
Life's way too rough
We can't live like this
'Cause it'll just end in eternal bliss
I'm not down for this
There's way too much to miss

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Oh yes, there's way too much to miss. Another friend of ours lost his life this weekend over something stupid. Another friend gone forever. Another friend who will miss everything...

Worse Off Than You

There are people worse than me
There some people who can't even see
Some who don't eat
Sometimes I think to myself
Some people are better off here
They have three meals and a place to sleep
The first thing that comes to mind
Is I gots to think deep
Some people have no clothes
But there is a lot of open doors
That's why people go to drugs
They start feeling like bugs
And do something stupid
Like get hit by Cupid

-Vicente

From The Beat: What does it say about our society that some people are better off in jail than in freedom? Yes, sometimes we do stupid things (and sometimes love can feel like a stupid thing), but that's how we learn. How 'bout you, Vicente? What have you learned?

Forever Mine

You would always be forever mine
When I look into your eyes
It makes me feel real good inside, mija
Now you wonder why this crazy love will never die
We could fight all night long and you still be forever mine
I want dose little tears from your eyes
Please don't cry, with only you, I stand beside
When I was torcido, you were the only one there for me
I thank you for your time, your love
Damn,
It means so much to me
There's no other jaina in the world
To take me away from you
This I know is true
You're my lovebird
And without you I'm through
So I wrote this song just to let you know what you mean to me
Me and you, you and me
Fulfilling each other's fantasies
This would never die
I promise I'll stand by your side forever
I love you, baby, forever mine
I love you, Linda

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: Is this an example of one of those things you don't truly appreciate until you lose it? If so, we hope you truly treasure the treasures that freedom brings.

I Can Still Strive For The Stars

Just because I've lived a life full of hate and crime, abused and misused drugs of death and insanity, acted without a second thought, not realizing the consequences until it was almost too late, but all of this doesn't limit my capabilities to strive for the stars above. I keep my county jeans creased up to perfection.

I try to read the Bible and fill my brain with educational books as much as possible to get a glimpse of what else the world has in store for my people. It's only to a small extent. What has been sewed into my brain through years of violence and hate seems to have been bounded by an impenetrable material.

I look into your eyes, and I'm not too sure what I see.

-Ogm

From The Beat: When you talk about what the world has in store for your people, do you also wonder what the world has in store for you, in particular? It's easy to get caught up out there, without time to think about the future. But now that you've had that time, and now that you've used the time to think about your life, and life in general, will your striving for the stars change in some way after this experience?

How Love Kills

Love is hate
Because love leads to betrayal
I should've known
It was lies in the mail
I opened my heart to disappointment
And sorrow
Why couldn't I see
That you'll still be the same tomorrow?
I let you see my soul
But now I feel bitter and cold
Why wasn't I smart enough
To simply walk away?
Why did I spend the last three years
Writing you every single day?
How could I believe
Your love was all I need
Now I feel disdain
And wish I could just suppress the pain
You know I need you and love you deeply
Looking at your picture, I smile weekly
Tears well up in my eyes
But I refuse to let them fall
So many times I cried
I gave you my all
Love is hate
Because love leads to betrayal
I should've known that love is destined to fail
Never prevail
Because pain runs too deep
Always present
Haunting you when you're awake and as you sleep
Love is supposed to be magical
So what did I do wrong?
Why did this realization take so long?
I'm angry and I'm hurting
Possibly even deserving
Yet still, I'm learning
Yearning
To make things right
My heart's too weak to fight
You see, I'm blind without your light
I can't even make it through the night
I thought you were the love of my life
I despise marriage
Yet agreed to be your wife
Love is hate
Because love leads to betrayal
You did me shady
Because I was in jail
Blinded by the veil
The illusion of bliss
There's no such thing as happiness
Broken hearted, here I lay
Wondering if I should stay
I can't live like this
But I can't live without your love
Unlike you, I wasn't lying when I said
You were my reason
My angel from above
Love is pain
Because love leads to betrayal
So much hurt, anger and pain
No future potential
We already failed

-Friskie

From The Beat: Only in the movies is love so magic/In life, love can often be tragic/Even if you wrote him every day for three years/Think of it as a good way to deal with your fears/He helped you get through it, and that could be called love/Even if illusion, your spirit was able to rise above/So focus less on the "hurt, anger and pain,"/And remember, there can be no flowers without some rain.

Your Pelonsito

This is dedicated to my one and only love. I miss you, baby, and I can't lie—I just wish that I can get out and be with you. I remember all the good things we did together, all the beautiful moments we share. I love you. You're so fine and you blow my mind and a girl like you is so hard to find. Don't forget your Pelonsito loves you with all my heart. Trucha. I'll be out sooner or later.

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: Yes, be out sooner (rather than later), and stay out forever.

Deep Thoughts

Every day my day gets closer to be set free from this slave center. I've almost maxed out my three months, and within those seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, I've been told what to do and how to do it.

I've been coming to juvenile hall since I was twelve years old. I just had another birthday in here—my second one. My first birthday here was at Hillcrest. I turned fourteen. I spent that birthday with my roommate Enrique. I've been coming back and fourth into this place for four years. Wasted most of my childhood youth to the San Mateo County Juvenile Hall. It's such a shame. I finally feel that my time has run out, and I'm ready to make changes to stop putting myself behind these walls.

Lifestyles that I love to live have also taken things I love from me. I want to enjoy the rest of my childhood because when I hit eighteen, I can't count on my mom to support me. She has done enough. She always come to see me, her son. I love my mom very much for doing this, because she doesn't have to, she chooses to.

I can't wait to be set free so I can start my childhood. Until then, I'm waiting for my last ten days to be gone.

-Ben

From The Beat: We hope you remember your own wise words when you walk out of here again. You must have learned by now how much easier it is to make promises when you have no chance to make your own decisions than to keep those promises once you are able to choose.

Strangers Get Lonely, Too

Strangers get lonely, too. People just look at us and they say, "They are crazy cholos, pelones, chingones, all gangster out." But deep inside, this stranger has feelings and gets lonely, too, missing and reminiscing about all the strange things I used to do. Strangers get lonely, too.

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: As we get older, the child we once were continues to lives in us. Sometimes, loneliness can just be missing that child. Whatever we call ourselves or our even our enemies, we all feel the same human feelings.

Hurt

There's nothing I want more
Than to be back in the arms
Of the one I adore
Even though he probably sold me a dream
Of one day becoming his queen
He's still the one my heart's longing for
He'll always be my king
I harbor no anger
Only hurt and tears
For all the things we've been through
Over the years
My angel from up above
He's the only man
I'll ever allow myself to love
I'm getting tired of trying to fight
To stay inside the safety of light
I want to give up and finally breathe
But I know, in the process
I'll be brought to my knees

-Friskie

From The Beat: You have the ability to turn this love affair into great literature. Write a book about this journey you've been on, and see where it takes you from here.

Modern Day Story

Live	learn	pain	need	
Love	anger		hurt	bleed
Touch	trace		reach	sight
Beauty	lost		shame	bright
Love	learn	hurt	need	
Live	anger		pain	bleed
Lost	shame		real	strife
Die	tender		living	life

-Friskie

From The Beat: We notice that all those adjectives and nouns are bracketed within two words that say it all: "Live" and "life."

LA Can't Help Me

Goin' to LA fo' a year. I feel it's not going to help. It's me that's going to want to change, not some group home can change me. How do I get out this situation?

-Italian Stallion

From The Beat: The only way to "get out" is through your own attitude. You're right, only you can be in charge of whatever changes you want to bring about. But that doesn't mean you can't learn new things or find valuable experiences and decent people wherever you are, including a group home in LA. Make the most out of it.

Invisible Girl

Is it possible to live without love?

Oblivious to even God above?

Unnoticed by mankind

Will I ever have my time to shine?

Will society ever see

All I possess in me?

All the beauty and strength

My ability to think

When will I exist?

Will I ever experience real happiness?

Am I going to be alone forever?

Will I ever become someone's treasure?

Why am I so lonely?

Will someone just come hold me?

Will someone ever just appreciate who I am?

Will someone ever value my opinion

And respect where I stand?

Mentally and physically

Why am I invisible?

-Friskie

From The Beat: You may think you're invisible, but you should know enough to realize that to some of us at The Beat, you are very, very visible. Of course, your writing distinguishes you as a uniquely powerful voice. (And remember this, Friskie: You have been published many times; you are on the internet. Your words will be there for society to see always.) The other way you are seen is inside these locked doors, and we're getting tired of seeing you squandering the gifts you've been given, squandering your freedom. You are not invisible, Friskie. It is time for you to see yourself!

Chosen One

People always woofin' on my name

And that shhh ain't good

I might be the chosen one

But it's still no good

I trust no female K

And I fear no ninja

My life

-Kabb

From The Beat: What makes you the chosen one? Who chose you... and for what?

Lookin' Straight Pelon

I saw you for the first time.

You were with the homie, Lucky, going to court

I was the only ruca all on my own

I started telling myself, "Damn, look at that vato

I'ma be lookin' straight pelon"

I should ask my homeboy, Chucky, about this clone

I started going to Central dining

I saw my homeboys, named Chucky, Sparky, Stranger, Drifter, and a lil' kid

They call him Chico, but now, if a jaina asks, "Who's that pelon?"

I won't know what to say, but, "Stay off him—he's not mine and he's not yours

He's just a homeboy, lookin' straight pelon."

I started walking down the hallways, all the time trying to look good—a little extra fly

You never know if I could see what you see all the time

But what I see is a good-lookin' bald-headed pelon

Lookin' straight into my eyes

I started feeling kinda funny—a little tingly deep inside

It's like if I found someone that truly cares about my life

I barely met you and you already made me feel special

Like I'm still alive

Smiling at me while tryin' to walk a straight line

But when I smile back

Just know that what I see is a good lookin', bald headed type of guy

Too good to believe in my crazy life

-Sad Eyes

From The Beat: We hope what you see that turns you on from the outside you also find on the inside where beauty truly counts for something. (If you want to do a cover for The Beat, you can give us something you've drawn. Only, we can never promise to use the art, only that we will consider it. Go for it.)

Desperate

I am desperate to succeed
Desperate to survive
Desperate to walk across that stage at least three times
Desperate to make my family proud
Desperate to find inner strength
I am desperate to strive the paths of success
Desperate to find true happiness
Desperate to set a positive example
Desperate to ignore the natural-born outlaw inside
But most of all
I'm desperate to stop feeling so desperate

-Nash

From The Beat: We really like that last line, "I'm desperate to stop feeling so desperate." Do you think that once you're set free that desperate feeling will leave? What do you think it'll take for you not to feel desperate?

Tribute

To keep it real, folks. Everybody here helped me out in some way, feel me? I know they have. I may not see it now, but it's already been done, so I say, "Thank you." That's my tribute.

-Kabb

From The Beat: Short but sweet... And we think you're right that you may not realize it now, but there are people helping you. What kind of help do you need from others?

I Will Go With My Family

I'm sittin' in this room
I don't know what to do
I wanna go with my family
I miss them
I got two more months to be here
I think that I have to be good
So when I get out of here
I will go with my family

-Payaso

From The Beat: Going with your family is one thing, but staying with them will be the real challenge. How do you think you can keep yourself from coming back to jail? Or the better question is how do you think you can stay away from putting yourself in a position where you're taken away from your family?

Using My Time

I am writing in the dark, but hear me out. Mane, I have not been using my time wisely at all, feel me? And shhhh, I regret it to the fullest. I hate that I don't know the things that I should, but I am getting past that by not givin' up, feel me?
This whole time I have been in here, I ain't try to do shhhh until now, 11/1/07. It's already been a year that I wasted and I think back, like, damn, and that shhhh ain't never gone leave my head, so that I keep my head up and when I fall eight times, get up, fell me? Real talk. Use ya' time.

-Kabb

From The Beat: It seems like you learned a very valuable lesson, but do you think there are people out there who haven't learned that yet? People older than you? Now that you've learned to use your time wisely, what are you doing to occupy your time?

Desperation

True desperation is when you are willing to do anything to get yourself out of a situation... For example, being locked in a tiny cell is hard, as you all know. I had temptations to make myself bleed, or vomit, just to have an excuse to go to the nurse, or get a bandage. I did not do it. I slept the desperation feeling off.
-Anonymous
From The Beat: What about those times when we can't just sleep such a feeling off, what do we do then? Do we succumb to our desperation or do we do something else to relieve ourselves of such a feeling?

-Kayos

From The Beat: You explained yourself very well. If you don't want to have desperation in your life, what do you want to put in its place?

My Decisions Hurt My Family, Friends, Myself

My desperation has caused me to make screwed-up decisions, do things I told myself I would never do. I hurt my family, my friends, and myself. I hate the feeling of being desperate, 'cause I feel like I've lost control over my life. That I need some certain thing so bad, I would anything to get it, then I feel ashamed 'cause I actually went through with those things. If I could choose something to not have in my life, it would be desperation.

-Kayos

From The Beat: You explained yourself very well. If you don't want to have desperation in your life, what do you want to put in its place?

I Would Like To See

I would be a police officer when I grow up. I would like to change the world, but, mostly, my city. I would like to see these kids change. I think gang life is taking over the young youth. It's sad that all these kids want this gang life. It's not supposed to be this way. These kids are actually pretty smart.

-Young Cadet

From The Beat: Do you think police are the solution to the problem of gangs? How so? What other solutions are there? Do you think there is no stop to gang violence? If so, why? If not, what can we do to stop it?

Stranded

I feel stranded all day, my ninja. Everywhere I go I am stuck, because I don't want to bring myself out, because I love what I do and until now I did not realize that what am I doin' messin' up my life for street life.
Shhh, forget that I need to start doing things for myself. Real talk. Everybody needs to wake up. If I can, you can. I was at the bottom of the pit, tryin' to stay solid to my ninjas, not doing what right for me, but now I can stay solid and do me, feel me? Never feel stranded. It's mind over matter.

-Kabb

From The Beat: So it sounds like you're saying that you felt stranded before you got locked up but now that you've been taken out of the situation, you don't feel so stranded. That's interesting. When you're stranded, do you have anyone that will assist you in finding your way?

Life After Death

For a while I think to myself, "What is life for? Why we here? Why we got friends? Why?"
But then I think Martin Luther King, Jr. died, shot. What he was doing was fightin' a war that will never end, but I look up to that man, because he found out what his life was all about. He was a leader like me. Everybody leads in a way. He lived to his death he did not know. What would you do if you know ya' due date?

-Kabb

From The Beat: So, to go with your title, what life did Martin Luther King Jr. create after his death? When you pass away (hopefully a long time from now), how do you want to be remembered?

Tony The Tiger

If I was an animal, I would be a tiger. Why I would be a tiger? 'Cause my name is Tony and my homies call me Tony the Tiger from the cereal Tiger the frosty flakes — that's one reason. The second reason is 'cause tigers are strong and vicious, and I like the colors orange and black.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Tigers seem to be very honorable animals. Tigers have to be vicious at times in order to survive. Do you think you need to do the same?

Locked Up

In the past years I have caused a lot of hardship because of the hardship that I have done, I don't dare to tell you. But all you need to know is you become a changed person once you have come to a correctional facility. It will change your life by the way you think and feel.
Once you get locked up a piece of your soul has already been ripped open and once you get out, if you get out, your soul will be sewed shut. So, if you get out, watch out. If you don't want your soul to be ripped open and never be sewed shut again.

-Weeds

From The Beat: We agree with most of what you said, but we don't believe that once people get locked up they automatically change for the better. In more cases than not, we believe people get worse after going to a 'correctional facility'. What can you do to not become one of those people?

Hate

Why do people hate? To keep it real they don't hate, they just want to be by ya' side so that they can do what you do, so they say things that they don't mean — snitch. So that you can stay on the same page as you. It's them ridin' you like a backpack — ya' shadow. They mad that you tryin' to do something, so they try to bring you down, but to them, it's like conversation, but dust them off, keep it movin', slow ninjas get left.

-Kabb

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the saying, "Imitation is the most sincere form of flattery?" Have you ever wanted anything that someone else had? How do you deal with wanting what someone else has got without hating on that person?

Where No Flowers Bloom

Call it irony,
A wicked like twist.
These days I live,
How they persist
Time is slow,
It whittles on by.
While parts of me,
Shrivel and die.
My will is wounded,
My body aches.
Submersed in evil,
Encircled by snakes.
Trapped and smothered,
I'm sniffing doom.
Here is the place,
"Where no flowers bloom."

My senses are tuned,
To their highest degree.

When incarcerated there are many sad and destructive images that you must cope with. Jail cells, riots, and all the rest of the madness can take its toll. It's almost like living in a place "where no flowers bloom." Speaking of which, this next writer who's writing from Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe, CA, sends us a poem about just that. It's very sad but very telling and we appreciate him for expressing himself so genuinely. Thank you for your powerful words and we look forward to hearing from you again real soon.

I suffer from occasional,
Insanity.
There's the mental pain,
The physical too.
Part of the package,
In this passage through.
It's all a bad dream,
A "B" rated flick.
A nightmare surrounded,
By a monster and brick.
It borders on hell,
A place they call doom.
Also known as,
"Where no flowers bloom!"

I was this girl who cared about others and who had feelings. I was Dennise but when I would work the streets, White Chocolate would come out.

DENNISE

We know for a fact in can be difficult to share certain things with people. And from what we gathered from this piece/poem by our star writer, Dennise, is that she chose a very degrading and lonely lifestyle. However, she remained strong through all of this and is now thinking some serious thoughts where she is — Black Canyon School in Phoenix, Arizona. It must be hard to accept the life she chose, so hopefully she can find a life that's easier to accept, but may take more perseverance to achieve. We know she'll keep writing because like any other great mind, she has a whole lot to say.

DIAMOND

We know for a fact in can be difficult to share certain things with people. And from what we gathered from this piece/poem by our star writer, Dennise, is that she chose a very degrading and lonely lifestyle. However, she remained strong through all of this and is now thinking some serious thoughts where she is — Black Canyon School in Phoenix, Arizona. It must be hard to accept the life she chose, so hopefully she can find a life that's easier to accept, but may take more perseverance to achieve. We know she'll keep writing because like any other great mind, she has a whole lot to say.

It Was

It was like I was watching a movie
And I was the lead star
It was real, but felt distant
From what was going on
It was like I could watch the action
But not feel it at all
It was like I was emotionally numb
It was like I had two personalities
I had the street mind then I have the safe mind
It was like I had to do it to survive
It was like it wasn't me
Someone else was in my body

Before I would work the streets. I was this girl who cared about others and who had feelings. I was Dennise but when I would work the streets, White Chocolate would come out.

White Chocolate didn't care about anything but herself and her money. White chocolate went through it all and was never scared. White chocolate was 18 while Dennise was 15. Dennise was hurt, scared and lonely, a person that could be talked into anything. I don't know I guess I have two personalities. Well three now that I found out that I'm pregnant AGAIN.

Well its 10:00 and they're trying to take my pencil. It's time to lay awake until tomorrow.

Beat Within

Love is giving your heart, soul and commitment to another person and expecting the same in return. You feel you can accomplish anything with this person by your side because he will help you overcome any and all obstacles.

Love is simple but powerful, it's waking up in the morning and knowing that someone will always hold you in his heart.

Darryl
There's 6 words say so much and they belongs to us.
Always
Destine
Destiny
Enchanted
Eternity
Forever

We are together throughout all time.
We're together for a purpose this is our fate.

Our love is magical
We are infinite. Together eternally.
Thinking of you constantly
Missing you emotionally
Wishing for you sexually
Needing you desperately
Wanting to touch you provocatively
Learning to hold you infinitely

Risk Of Discovery

Gangsters don't want gangsters to cross over the brink
of truth
They frown on any religion
Hell's kitchen
Like a captain without the crunch,
Like a crumb fallen from a loaf of bread
Choose God instead
They say, "It's about us"
Deep inside they know that religion has the influence on
Any person, place or source
"Officially," of course
A risky discovery — cover to cover
A sort of constant psychological warfare purposed
I'll put it in reverse
With a quick verse
A gangster under surveillance, Satan wants your soul
purchased
The interplay of Gods uniqueness is the intimacy that
exists
Between my body and soul,
And your soul and body is the marvel of creation
A beauty 10 times 10
I no longer keep my beliefs in secret
These hands tightly grip God's unique book
Many a time as I folded my handkerchief,
Placed it over my bible and prayed for the homies
hardships
Don't you ever think of the baptism dips
You're a gambler slowly losing them chips
Your whole wallet landing in the pockets of your "G"
friend's coat
Cant gripe cause it's a so-called love boat
Huddled together for the next game plan
Kicked around like a can
Being a "G" I had lived with the thought of death I was
told I would be shot or stabbed I knew those threats
were in the leg,
I couldn't dodge it like Clark Kent
Now, "I can do what I wanna do now"
Not, "do what I got to do"
I'm not worried about the risk of discovery
"It's the discovery of risk!"
Playing smoothly like a brand new compact disc

Sending each and every poem in their own envelopes and writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, we bring you this superstar Beat writer. He sends us several powerful poems that we think all are worth reading. He talks about many different parts of life, from his belief in God to the sayings people are dying for day in and day out. We can't say too much about Alex that you don't already know because he's shared so much with us thus far. But what we can say before we shut up and let him do the talking is that he holds a very special place within all of us who read his writing.

No Patience Whatsoever

Drive thru, what? Say who!
Waiting impatiently with these hungry jack-in-the-box,
Lover of Jumbo Jacks,
Fries and crispy "o" rings
They cook up
My nose said, "Stop"
This caravan was too slow for me
My patience wasn't on the up and up
Another empty bag and another empty cup
Stacked high, and ready for an ice-cold shake
I pushed hard on the petal, peeled rubber,
And cursed at this speechless Jack teller
Damn basketball head funny
Looking feller
The homeboys and home girls were mad at me
Bouncing around,
Packed in the ride like sardines smothered in hot sauce,
And a near collide
And me an impatient fool,
Homie said, "Chill out lil' bro, calm down, your crazy"
He took the wheel, the night went kinda swell, up until...
Me again, "Well, well, well"
The homies wanted to get high
Not now but RIGHT NOW
Told 'em to kick back lets find a cool spot
Not
No patience whatsoever
Seemed like forever
As I recall, should have had patience on the parole lines
and employment lines not that I got a job that day
Parole plans
Nay
Any way, but wherever with patience things will get better,
Don't leave so fast — Wait
No patience whatsoever
Could be the devils bait

My Little Puppy Ruth

Pink blankets, bottles and diapers for my baby's arrival
Bought by family and all
Racing to the hospital like Evil Kineval
Only to face a cold truth: A miscarriage; is what nurse
stated
Me and my girlfriend's relationship slowly deteriorated
I chose gang-affiliated
DRUGS TAINTED
I was standing by her bedside
She said it was cause of the drugs as she cried
Still can't believe she died
My Ruth was just a fetus, all belly and dome,
I told my homie sarcastically
Look at his flick — she kinda looks like E.T.
Lil' arms and legs curled up
She was my lil' pup
She was connected

To PCP pipelines, and heroin injected
Nothin' helped me and my girlfriend equip for
parenthood
I don't even know if this G would have actually
Stuck around to read her a bedtime story,
Or having her panting by my knee as I cook my daughter's
dinner
Prison one month later
Building up money for the gang was the only way I can use
the word Breadwinner
I chalked it up to overwhelming loss
Empty cradle toss
I love and miss Ruth so much
Never got to touch
One day there will be a heavenly factor
Holding Ruth in my arms, so tiny and cute
In God's splendor
To those whom lost lil' ones, I feel your pains
My prayers in chains

If It's Gods Will

If its gods will then I shall become an elder
Whether 90 or 100 year old feller
I'll be more wiser and still shimmering like a newly
minted dollar
Teeter, totter classic roast volt shocker,
Rocking in my rocking chair, waiting on bingo
Driving slowly to and fro
Hand crafted,
Customized carved cane of fine wood,

Tinted bifocals, and pearly white choppers,
Chomping stopping off at different stores for senior
discount sales
For us shoppers
My grouchy wife tending to her plants and roses,
Yelling at me for no reason
But better than a lonely season
If its gods will, I'll be spoiling my grandchildren
Warning of the worlds sin
Giving instead of taking, loving instead of hating,
Love for the human race, and no plastic thinking
Just one girl, my wife, that's it, that's all
Don't need a plate full
Talking non-stop with the folks, about the good old days,
If it's god's will
Then I'll become his old angel

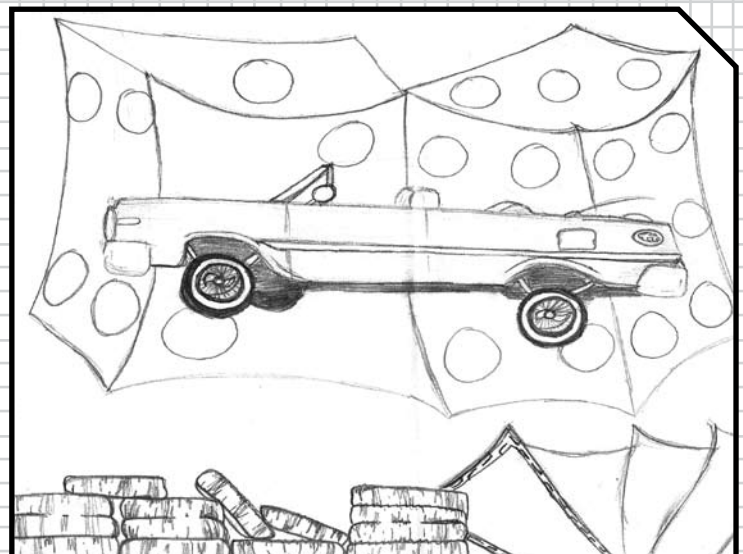
*With all this happiness I never ever thought
My aunty and unk's life would be done*

Nobody Knows Why

My heart is still in so much pain as I whisper to myself:
In my cell
"Why" did my uncle and auntie have to commit suicide
I broke down when I received the letter saying they died
Twelve years and still, "Nobody Knows Why"
A greeting kiss and a good bye kiss for aunty,
And a real big hug and handshake for uncle
Aunty would tickle me and make me giggle
My uncle was super cool
A domino playin' fool
He drank his Coors,
Got kinda loud, sitting in his chair roasting everyone
He was a funny one
With all this happiness I never ever thought
My aunty and unk's life would be done
Was it because of suffering or misery? Cause I never
sensed it.
On our birthdays I think even more of you
I bring myself to laugh too
Like the day we rigged the cake to blow up in your face
unk,
You grabbed cake and threw it at us, chunk by chunk
I just want refreshing thoughts of you and aunty
No bitterness, no self-pity, I was real disappointed but
now I see
Only "God" needs to know why we all miss you guys
man, my mom said; You guys looked peaceful in your
caskets
I'll see you soon... if I could I'd sneak on one of these
NASA rockets
Just to be closer

Empty Words

Generally, I jot down today, a new day
How G's therefore prefer thee majestic words:
Can't stop, won't stop
Until you get a life sentence top
Merely four empty words, which prove everyday —
insufficient
Sixteen letters, not worth a dollar or cent
99
Stepping out of line
This poem is for damsels and gents who are non-stop
outrageous
These empty words are contagious
For the thunderbirds
And lost herds
G's so harshly indicted
Times tables
X-gang enhancements
And when it enables G's will think it over and over
That "cant stop" "wont stop" can't hold forever,
Won't hold forever!
This brotherhood of would I, could I, should I,
Brought down to size
Reprimanded by the we
For the smallest failure or wrongdoing reminds me
Of the never-ending
Gang expected obligations
Inclinations
To my own thoughts of "can stop" "will stop"
Extolled its not what I thought it would be
Didn't bargain for me
Nor did I want it, like a shopping spree
If I had known it was going to be like this I wouldn't
have swaggered into it
Like yarn waiting for the knit
So I told God: "You must have forgiveness on me
through your son
I was an ignorant G without faith,
Without previous knowledge of the true facts of life for
me
But, hey I learned a different slogan:
"Can't stop" loving Jesus
"Won't stop" reading the bible
I want a real title
That's noble



Chronic I

Strange things happen down yonder where a mad soul
in loose-fitting
Robe,
Slow talks with a scorched voice
Never a chance — only choice
Judges not at liberty to go against
The semicircle of society's smiling clan
You know the P.D — D.A. — prosecutor — man
I see why radicalized hits the fan
Real angry, lost faith decades ago
So?
Gotta get our own justice — Go!
Law textbooks
Does it sound like a good deal?
Yes or no?
Plead "guilty" to this or that, I can get you life,
Instead of death row
With no second looks
Go to trial
And you'll be in prison a long while
Government is none other than currency crooks
Weather torn us flags zigzagging outside the courthouse
thru-pitched thunderstorms and torrential rains
In a classic sequence of colors: Red stripes like
bloodstains
White skeletons
Blue stars falling out in the cold with no lawful access
No justice
Campaigning the truth, publicizing abuse
Can't grab a phone to speak in cautious monotone
Where you at?
You with human rights or alone?
I've experienced the humiliation of the all-evil K9
With no we vs. them
The elevator rides in county
Repercussion bounty
My sig on a USC 1983
Slammed in PBSP
SHU for gassing some K9 fool
Why ask why? No miss
Cause of the "chronic injustice"

Choreography Of Duty

Gun
Control yelling get down
Opposition frown
The green light to manufacture pieces
Made from found materials
Skills to skills
Coded messages, to fulfill "our-r" imperials
Roman Numerals
Slashers
For "G" handpicked crashers
Did what I had to do. A slice
For a disrespect price
Unusual notice of occurrence depicting human sketches
Victim
Showing 8 stitches
D.A. referrals, reprisals and removals and in denials no
signatures
On 115 copies
Just another "G"
Going a full-go
God was probably real disappointed in me
Several G's boring scars
Delirious chores
Homies always saying: "I'm going to cut something up"
And when my time came to bleed I thought about those
I did in...
Thoughts kicked in "I deserved it" "they deserved it"
I say today — No — nobody deserved it!
Sworn
Cost me a release date
Received three years, with half,
This was '94, I was too bold
Third loss of time fold
'87-'90, as well duty, B and C,
C.O.C.
Plotting
Silent voices on the walls talking in code
Souls mold
One must never forget: "Live by the sword
Die by the sword"

Another X-mas Without My Dad

1983

I peeked behind the curtain when I heard a door slam,
K-9 swooped up the walkway
And the shuffling had me in my Nike kicks,
Didn't know whether to run fence over fence or stay
Thought he was here for me
The neighbor said, "No don't flee" I'll go see
And then the low-blow
My number one fellow
Was found dead in his car of a heroin overdose
My best friend since birth man we were real close
DAD WHY DID YOU HAVE TO OVERDOSE??
So here I was with the white frosted tree
Angel on top looking at me
Colorful wrapped gifts in a circle
Lights blinking and glossy icicles
With me, a neighbor, and our dog "Wolf"
Waiting for mom to come home
I didn't know how to explain these kinds of things alone
So I walked into his bedroom preserved as he left it 2

weeks prior,
He was always on the go, I looked at the oak-wood bed,
And chest full of collectables in their own right
The whole room decorated with 49er gear and autographed
jersey made me think of the many games we attended
It was out of sight
His lil' desk still had a empty beer can on it, by a framed
photo of me, him, mom on a "1976" prison visit
He was cool and calm, just don't push his buttons
He was a hot-tempered bone crusher sharpened — glint
I've seen his bloody fists, loved them clubs and bars,
But sadly also the needle
Filled with poppy seed oil
God, please forgive my crazy dad Rob
The devil's job
A family's sob
To all dads of this world,
Don't leave your kids celebrating x-mas without you
Beware the brown sticky goo!
I can only pray for my dads DOB to RIP
Number 24 — X-mas without Robby

Sources Of Strength

And throughout all my years of struggling. I have counted on many people and things as my sources of strength. In order to help keep me going through my times of hardship. Through my times of suffering and these sources of strength have really helped me along the way and right now I have been locked up in prison for almost 19 years and at some points of my incarceration, I have had many thoughts of giving up or just make someone take me out or go on some kind of mission that would have my life taken away from me. But my will to live was much stronger then the thoughts I was having from time to time about giving up. But my inner strength that's within me just would not let me give up. And during my most difficult times was when I would tend to reach out to all the things I considered to be my sources of strength cause my own strength was not always enough strength to help me make it alone the way.

In this one-man cell I have been living in for way over a decade. My mother Marilyn, my brother Sedrick, and my sister Tiffany has a lot to do with being a great source of my strength. Through uplifting letters they always wrote to me. Showing that they still cared about me and in my brother Sedrick letters he wrote me he would always be encouraging me to keep my eyes on the Lord and to keep seeking him with all my heart, mind and soul and my brother Sedrick would tell me in his letters how much he loved his big brother Michael and how he was going to show me that when he get out of prison and in his letters he also speaks about how he was staying focused and serious about his future goals and that he was going to be a youth counselor when he gets out cause he wants to truly hug the kids and my baby brother Sedrick, went on to say, in other letters he wrote to me, how he was going to be successful this time and once he was released from prison how his body and flesh was going to be free, but his mind, soul and heart will always be in prison cause he could never forget the way the system have giving so many Black men life sentence unjustify and cause must be advocated and one of my closest friends who moved from New York to Tampa in 1980, at that time his nick name was E.T. and we met up with each other like in 1980 or 1981, in W.T. Edwards. Which is Tampa Detention, then for some years I had been out of touch with E.T. then we met back up with each other at Marin Correctional Institution then his nickname had changed to York York, but his real name is Reginald Jacobs, and for some years we done a good bit of time together.

Then my friend Reginald Jacobs went home from Florida State Prison, in May 2000, for almost 7 years I did not hear anything from him. Then one day mail call came around and the officer had a few letters for me and one of the letters had Reginald Jacobs on there. My old friends York York, this brought a big smile to my face and for years while we was doing time, York York had became to be one source of my strength cause I learn a lot from him, and he always gave me an inspiration. So I open up his letter and went to reading it. It says what's up Mike Mike. I'm chilling hard on this end, God is powerful just hang in there. I know you thought I was never going to holla at you, a lot of stuff is going on in this crazy world and what's up with your cases. You got to get up out of there Mike you stay in them law books and you know I keep a plan on this end and Mike no matter what never stop praying Psalms 34, 23, 37, 66, 143 read these chapters every day out loud so the spirit of the Lord can hear you be strong Mike and that letter from him saying Mike I just got your second letter back to my friend York York.

Then about a month later I got another letter from him

Some people believe that the purpose of life is to give. We all have our own special talents and intelligence so when we share these things with people who may not have exactly the same strengths as us, we then act as a source of strength for them. Everyone needs someone to lean on, especially in times like incarceration when we're isolated from those we're used to leaning on. Our most consistent writer this year speaks about exactly this in his piece titled, "Sources Of Strength." He's writing from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, and we always appreciate that return address because Michael is definitely a major factor in this great publication.

saying Mike I just got your second he said Mike you just keep on reading the scriptures and praying. The Lord will make a way I'm a witness remember I had a lot of time, no family down there in Florida and I was sick. At 150 pounds you know! Then the Lord lifted me up or may I say raised me up you seen it happen Mike every day I said I was going home soon, next year. People don't know the power of God and the power of words when you talk negativity, negative things happen. Positivity is the same way if you want positive stuff to happen in your life you have to speak it, don't ever claim a life sentence out your mouth. Say I'm on my way home healthy and spiritual laced dipped in the blood of Christ, God created the whole universe with his words, so you know words are powerful. I know you listen to me Mike, so put knowledge on ya' cap, and don't let it fade away.

Well I can't drop too many jewels on you at once, but every time I write I will make sure to lace you with some spiritual groceries Mike, people try to act like it's all about money. Money is nothing Mike, anybody can get money, it's all about the Lord and helping those that can't help themselves, that's where the blessings come in. That was the end of that letter and Andrew LeRose A.K.A. and # one was another good friend of mine, who I met in TCU Unit at Union and we had become two pretty good friends right before he went home and this kid was 23 years old and smart and we both had a lot in common cause we sometimes stayed up late night having real positive conversation about his passes and the plans he had when it was time for him to get on the other side of them gates, Andrew one day sent a note say "Hommie I can't make no promises I'll write every week, but depending on my situation what I do. I only know about a handful of people I plan keeping in touch with. People who can be beneficial to me, at the same time helping them." And # one went to say in that note to say Mike Mike, it's people like you with your knowledge that can keep me from returning to places like this and he had his home address at the end of the note, then he stated that he expected me not to violate my personal information, I trust you enough to judge you won't.

A hustle is temporary, a friend is forever and, # one second letter to me, said Mike Mike, I reached out to you as a friend cause I felt a confidence about you. I watched how you carried yourself, how you present yourself. In a way it's comforting for someone who really seeks a change. Mike, you've experienced life. I know you seek other wise, but are in no other position except being sincere plus waiting for your time. It's hard to define, it's like I know I can trust you plus I really don't know it's just I to have experienced life. Through my experience, I've learned from them or try to and Mike Mike, I never really had a good relatives with my brothers plus sisters. So I reached out to you in a sense for a relationship like a brother, because you understand life. Not just my life, but life in particular. It's that closeness we share I know I can come to you for advise (good or bad) your not going to be judge mental your going to be open plus relate with a understanding Mike Mike it's you I feel I can trust that's why I reached out because I can do for you. A friend goes a long way in life and Andrew had become to be one source of my strength with his love and friendship and I was source of his strength.

While growing up we all have the urge to be accepted. It is natural to want friends and to "fit in." However, the problem comes from where you choose to "fit in."

Sometimes it blows our minds to recognize how much talent our country locks up. There are people who are incarcerated with extraordinary capabilities and talents. This next writer is one of those people. He sends us several works of art this week (he even sends the first two parts of an eight part project he's working on about how capitalist culture shapes the minds of the youngsters that are coming up nowadays. He also writes about his relationship with God and he writes an incredible losing love poem. He's writing from somewhere in Fairfield, CA, but we don't know the actual facility. He shares his beliefs and thoughts with the best of them. And we're always glad to be introducing such masterpieces.

Millennial Hip Hop: "Ghettoism", Our Generation?

Part 1: Conforming Or Free Thought?

I see too many people fall into the pit of conformity — myself included. Mainstream ideas, like the new hip-hop image of "ghettoness" or the old "gangsterism," get put in front of us. Out of ignorance we blindly follow what looks pleasing and "cool." I see this as a major problem with my generation.

While growing up we all have the urge to be accepted. It is natural to want friends and to "fit in." However, the problem comes from where you choose to "fit in." There is a vast majority who blindly fall into social groups for various reasons. They are drawn by curiosity or a need for something different. Some just see the plus sides to a lifestyle, like money earned in gangs or the respect of a hood figure, and blindly fall into it not knowing what comes with it.

Personally, I'm not talking about those who set successful goals and achieve them. I am talking about the vast majority of kids (urban and suburban) who follow the "ghetto" hype. This is major way of conforming to what is popular and, sad to say, what has become accepted. I'll refer to them as the "ghetto" generation. This form of "ghettoness" is displayed in many areas of life. It is not just a neighborhood or apartment building, but now is transformed into a lifestyle. It comes with a lingo, dress, attitude, body language and culture; fueled by the music along with the artists' and popular movies which portray "ghettoness" at its finest. You will find this lifestyle lived out in the urban culture, suburbia and upper class areas; it is not secluded to just one. It has infested every community.

The "ghetto" culture roots run deep in society. They are a part of the "gangsterism" and "thug" culture that came from the 90's. The main difference is that the earlier "gangsterism" was mainly secluded to a couple communities, with the exception of certain areas where the need of underground marketing and gangland tactics were needed to survive. This life style would not be seen in the majority of middle and upper class America. Although, currently, those places have acquired their share of problems with gangs, but it is less prevalent and not necessarily a means of survival.

The "ghetto" culture has manifested itself into all societies around the world and is glorified in every walk of life. A lot of people see this movement, per se, as a way of freely expressing and empowering themselves. There are many ways people fall into this lifestyle, but the most dangerous ways, as I see it, are as follows. They fall into it because of a rap artist and try to live out the lyrics of the song. Isn't this conforming? They see the flashy jewels and cars and want to acquire them the "street" way. Can we call that conforming? They see the power and respect that "thugs" and gangs get on the TV's and want it. This is not conforming?

A problem with the majority of the "ghetto" culture is that they try to mimic the rap lyrics they hear and the life styles they see on either the radio or T.V a lot who do this do not know the harsh reality that comes from that life style. Not all who are a part of the "ghetto" culture do this type of "playacting" but solely use it as a means of expression, which can be positive if they use it as constructive venting. But, there are a lot of people who choose to live out the negative aspect of the culture instead. Is this conforming or free though?

Some are born into the negative "ghetto" culture or are forced into it by circumstance whether urban or suburban, there are kids (and I say kids because that's what they are) who must make life changing decisions without the proper knowledge and fully developed mental skills of seeing the long term affects of their decisions. Who in their right mind would think a twelve year old boy will make the right decision about drugs or gangs when all he sees is the glory gained by it or hears of the power achieved by these things?

It's a sad state of affairs when someone's youth is stolen by the d-game or gangland mentalities. This is a negative side to the "ghetto" culture that is forced to our generation. When this way of living goes beyond the dress and attitude it becomes a real problem.

Not everyone can successfully sell drugs. Not every guy can be a "playah" or "pi". Women are not just tools of pleasure to be disrespected. Not all of them are "runners" or "rippers" to be treated disrespectfully and referred to constantly as a "slut" or "hoe". Not everyone can have the so-called "thug" glory or "gangland" immortality. The sad fate of many who believe in the negative side of the "ghetto" culture are in jails or graveyards. I know too many people who are locked up that could have avoided it.

The negative side to the "ghetto" culture runs rampant in the minds of the people lost in it's glory. We must stop this degrading way of living that is increasingly present in our society. We must educate ourselves with truth and then help our people become educated.

I speak of our people as a whole African Americans, Caucasian, Asian, and Latino. This mixed generation is our country's future. "Ghettoism" will effect the next generation drastically. We must embrace our culture, but not glorify it's negative side we must come together and create a voice for ourselves not just create a voice for ourselves not just prison statistics or more gangland communities fueled by our drugs, money, hip-hop and ignorance. Our goals must change not necessarily our culture.

I do advocate truthful knowledge in drugs, gang, sex education. We cannot sugar coat it anymore. Maybe if I knew that harsh reality while at age twelve I would've made a better decision for my life. We all must travel our own road and find our own truths.

The glorification of the gang life and d-game have gone far enough. The only way to counter them is with truth about the consequences that come with those choices. It may cause division in our generation, but we must stop the

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lowering of moral standards and the glorification of negative persona's. For too long have I heard and participated in the disrespect of females. This must stop! Both sexes are vital to this generation. Why would we want to lower the self-esteem and self-worth of our future wives and mothers to our children? Ladies, why do you allow us to treat you the way we do? Why do we embrace the negative side to our culture and glorify it? Don't you think we allowed it to go on for too long?

It's time to search out real truths, as I've made a choice to do. I do my best not to glorify my past. I want to respect the women of our world. I seek understanding and knowledge. I still embrace the style and culture of my generation. The difference in me now is I try to be cautious and avoid the negative influences of out generation. I can still play the part. But, don't let this fool you. I believe in educating myself and seeking truths to believe in. survival

is something we all must do in our situations, but conforming and falling victim to thoughtless decisions by peer influence is something we must all avoid. I say this to encourage the reader (male or female).

How long are we going to embrace the negative side of our culture? We must change ourselves then help influence others. What better way then for dope dealers, gang members, pimps and prostitutes to spill truth to the next person to prevent them from being unknowing victims of the hype? What better testimony is there for people then reformed "criminals" making a change to better our degrading generation? This can only be done by truthful knowledge of what is right and wrong. We must change to better our situation. It will not change on it's own. How long will people close their eyes and ears? How long are we going to allow this foolishness to destroy us? How long are we going to conform to the destruction?

we can come together and continue to share our struggles (urban, suburban, & rural) to help gain understanding of each other and better our generation. . .

Millennial Hip-Hop: "Ghettoism Our Culture?"

Part 2: Positive Breakdown Of Ghettoism

Now to go into deeper revelation about what I believe to be the main cultural movement of our generation, which I call "ghettoism."

The "ghetto" lifestyle has manifested itself into a socially acceptable lifestyle and behavior that anyone can embrace. It's available from the baggy style of wearing cloths; sagging pants; fitted hats (cocked sideways or backwards). Ear piercings with the diamond stud and expensive jewelry — the bigger the better; and white T's and jeans with matching shoes. (Color coordination to match your clothes) and, many hairstyles vary from different ethnicities.

The "ghetto" generations speech is slang. It's created to uniquely converse amongst each other (this varies from place to place) for example, the boy will not necessarily use the same slang as the ATL (Atlanta). However, the music we listen to is generally the same.

It seems like hip-hop and mainstreams artists flood the radio speakers. But, now local artists are on the rise in influencing specific geographical regions. People are now beginning to form their own style and relate to the struggles and style to their specific community.

The attitude of many "ghetto" generationers is the mean-mug, "I'm harder then you," look. It's coupled with a walk on a slight limp or movement of the shoulders; a kind of don't mess with me display that can be used as a form of intimidation to outsiders.

These styles I described are basic for our "ghetto" generation and they can be adopted by everyone. I use the term generation in speaking for the people who embrace the "ghetto" culture. These styles and speech are not necessarily bad. It is a way of expressing ourselves the way we want. But, always present is the negative side that comes with "ghettoism": the glorified street life that is taken to the extreme by "thugged: out kids and "gangland" dreamers. I will get into this in my next paper. For now I was to focus on the positive side of the culture.

"Ghettoism" is a highly adaptive lifestyle that fits into all societies, urban and prominent upper class cultures. I believe that if we embrace the positive side to this movement we can distinguish ourselves to be a generation untied

under one theme.

"Ghettoism: is not just secluded to one specific race or gender, but is now embraced by all who accept the lifestyle. I know this does not factor out the racial problems of America and class animosity, which we usually see as the "rich getting richer and the poor growing poorer." As a whole we can unite under one cause and fight together to be heard, simultaneously, helping to advocate the advancement of out generation.

I am not going to go as far to say that just because we have embraced this "ghetto" culture that we all live on equal playing fields, economically and socially. But, we can come together and continue to share our struggles (urban, suburban, & rural) to help gain understanding of each other and better our generation by forming a united front. These are positive things we can all do together. As the "ghetto" culture of our generation continues to grow and gain notoriety, we can strive to do positive things with our influence. I believe we are at the forefront of our generation and need soldiers to step up and fight for what is right and strive to help others. We must use the common bonds we have together.

There are many issues we must confront from morality to the prison system (these I will expound on later). I believe our culture can be a blessing not a curse. We must utilize our influential assets to grow as a whole and empower, not just ourselves economically, politically and socially, but our whole generation. We must succeed in unifying the people of our culture to better this nation for generation to come.

I may sound contradictory from my first paper, and it may carry throughout the rest of my writing on this subject. But, this is not my intention. I believe we have two sides to our "ghetto" culture, the positive and negative. One way or another we will confirm to either one. This is not in itself a bad thing. It's when we begin not to think and educate ourselves but go along with the destructive hype that is expanding in our generation. Too many people on the streets are living out this destructive and many locked-up men are glorifying the criminality in our society. It's time for a change. Knowledge and truth is needed to change our youth!

Government Suppliers

The words changin', ain't it amazing!
 Too many moms cryin', young folks dyin'
 But the government keeps supplien',
 Destruction and they're tired of our whinier!
 That's why we need to say, "can you stop lien'?"
 Show our support for them is declinin',
 No longer will they be denyin', our situation well
 Show them the facts and see how they react.
 A new epidemic is plaguing the nation,
 Trigger happy youngsta's enraged with inflation,
 Enraged with the situation, enraged 'cause societies not
 changing!
 How can we help the government with our attributes?
 Theres kids in hoods who can't afford soups!
 This isn't just a white, black, or Mexican thing.
 It's not a race, more of a generation theme.
 We got issues that need to be seen.
 No place is safe even within rig security gates!
 Stop the gang bangin', your way to late.
 Intervention was lost when the new armored car was
 bought, how much did it cost?
 Now they put prices on our toes,
 They enhance the street rage mode!
 Wondering now it came about, wielding their hierarchy
 about, with their own way out.
 Not knowing the trap of the streets,
 It sucks you back through till you claim defeat.
 Lets kick another issue on this beat.
 Does the judicial system need for me to repeat,
 The violence they enhance and the destruction they
 advance,
 Is there something that needs to be remapped?
 One of the last industrialized nations to do that,
 Killin' inmates, but we all knew that.
 How about this fact?
 Giving juveniles life with no parole.
 I thought we held a morality role.
 One of four countries who do this,
 Hope ya'll knew this.
 Over 2,000 youngsters without parole!
 They can go as young as ten,
 What were they thinkin' then?
 Not to mention, highest incarceration rate in
 The world, that's our criminal retirement pension.

Has this caught any attention!
 The worlds changin', aint it amazing!
 Too many moms crien', young folks dien'
 But the government keeps supplien',
 Destruction and their tired of our whinien!
 That's why we need to say, "Can you stop lien'."
 Show our support for them is declining'.
 No longer will they be denyin', our situation.
 We'll show them the facts and see how they react.
 Oversea's intervention deserves our attention.
 Forcing democratic societies on people who don't believe
 our invention,
 Causing world tension, destruction, relentless!
 Tear down, build up, that's how the US rolls up!
 Veto power on the UN Committee,
 If it effects us theirs no way were submitting!
 Extradite the convert who destroyed your nation,
 Please, but give us the one who bombed our train station.
 This is our public relations,
 Jumping on Kosovo's mass demonstrations,
 Joined up with the powerful UN conglomeration,
 To bomb a rebelling nation.
 It's funny how we can support Kosovo,
 But we can't apologize to the Nicaraguan's
 For the destruction we saw.
 Supporting underground terrorists, we all know.
 These are a few, how many of you knew?
 The world's changin', aint it amazing!
 Too many moms crien', young folks dien',
 But the government keeps supplien',
 Destruction and there tired of our whining',
 That's why we need to say, "Can you stop lien'"
 Show our support for them is declinin'.
 No longer will they be denyin', our situation
 We'll show them the facts and see how they react.
 Education is the key, I'm sure if we were smarter
 The blocks would be a lot less hotter.
 Our generation is not that bad,
 Misguided perhaps, following the fad.
 Lets educate and learn truth,
 Not statistics subject to goons.
 Too many of our moms been crien',
 Peoples homeboys is dien'.
 So lets lern something new,
 Not lettin' the strings of the puppet master guide you!

Beat

What's up...

Here is the second part to the 8 part break-up. Also, I added in a poem. I got a lot of the info out of Noam Chomsky's "Failed States." I thought the incarceration facts he put in from '04 were pretty disgusting.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said America is virtually alone in executing inmates as far as industrialized countries go. Also, our incarceration rates are 5 to 10% higher then European rates. And for us giving youths life without parole it said only four countries do this. America, South Africa, Israel, Tanzania with the US totaling 2,225 youths sentenced like this and 12 total with the other three countries combined.

Such practices are in violation of a UN Convention on the rights child which was ratified by every UN member except the US and Somalia, which by the way has no working government!

This I got from Noam Chomsky's "Failed States." Just wanted to share that. Praying always for y'all. One love.

Beat

I got this poem about life and one on my old girl, basically for finality. To get it off my chest. Then I'm going to re evaluate some things and finish up another project I plan on shootin' you. It is an eight part break down of what I see a part of our generation quickly becoming. I pray you dig my work. This work helps me get through the time without believing it complete waste. I try to portray the struggles of life with a message to not take the road I did, or if you end up in a similar spot to make a right decision. I feel personal testimony is a good way to get the point across. I just pray I don't get repetitive or played. The beat is a powerful project and a wonderful publication to let truth be seen and heard portrayed by the youths going through the struggles. Project what! Is off the hook. Makes me embarrassed thinking of how easy my younger years were. I continue to pray for your publication and thank you for giving people a voice. Respect to you and yours. One love.

Love

Love, is it something that I can touch.
 Love, it's something that I want so much.
 Love, is that how you say her name.
 Love, is that what you expect from me, maine.
 Love, that's what I want from this world.
 Love, it's what I showed no girls.
 Love, it's not just a feeling or fruit.
 Love, that's how you spell truth.
 Love, is what we all need and want...
 Love, why is this world so cold.
 Love, can it take the pain from the game.
 Love, why does it hurt to say her name.
 Love, what's wrong with my life.
 Love, can you teach me wrong from right.
 Love, why is my heart so cold.
 Love, take this travail from my soul.
 Love, come into my life.
 Love, take away this strife.
 Love, why am I so full of hate
 Love, make me real not fake.
 Love, I'm a stop saying love.
 Love, is only sent from above.



Untitled

The pain I feel in this life,
 Is nothing my simple words can describe.
 The pain I see in the world, is everything everyone feels.
 I don't come from a broken home.
 I don't come from the American dream.
 I come from the suburban streets, it's simply what the eye
 meets.
 Family problems, had 'em.
 Parents split, had it.
 Drug addiction, it's in me.
 Street star, Cadillac car, neighborhood leader, girl
 mistreater, gang land beef meter.
 I know the streets get meaner.
 Top notches, fossil watches, clean cuts, saucy fits, money
 thick, 50 was sick, game, I was on top of it.
 Broke, strung out, bouncin' home to home, burnin'
 friends, cold heart within', lifelong binge.
 The drugs had there home within'.
 Life is not easy my friend.
 Juvenile hall, youth camp, rehabilitative boarding school,
 county jail, will be in a prison cell?
 Is this why I feel so alone?
 Is this cold world what I call my home?
 Or is it my fault with the lifestyle I condoned.
 What about my girl, my love, my life.
 She consumed my thoughts.
 I would've done anything for that sacred walk.
 A walk to remember, that book is ever so tender.
 Blonde hair, beautiful eyes, gorgeous dress size.
 Why did the streets consume my life?
 Lost trust for all girls, is that why I used them for personal
 thrills.
 Enough of the bad what about the good.
 Isn't that what's supposed to come from suburban
 neighborhoods?
 Good grades as tyke,
 When I was real young I was momma's golden son.
 Family vacations, these I really miss taken'.
 Played sports, was bomb on the water polo courts.
 Never was able to pursue my dream.

Is it because of the drug scene or gang land theme?
 I quit that when I was a young teen, all I focused on was
 my team.

Graduated high school.

It seemed like they wanted me to fail, it propelled me to
 excel.

This was accomplished through six schools.

Forget administrative rules.

December of '03, graduate for me.

Is this all the good I can recount?

Even if I tried to do good it was naught.

My drug addiction put me in a tough spot.

There's so much in life I wish I dropped.

Drug abuse, girl misuse, street glory.

I don't want anymore sad stories.

If you hear this, feel this, respect this, know this.

If you can nod your head, respect what's said, then maybe
 you can change what lies ahead.

I pray for a better life lead.

But this is my lot.

I cry I will not.

Head held high, I do what I can, but I don't even know the
 definition of a true man.

I'll survive 'cause that's who I am.

The pain will stay.

I wish for a better day.

But I feel for my peoples.

All stories are different society misfits,

Outcasts', lost souls, street soldiered life codes.

Daddies lil girl gone bad, sweat hearts who found the
 wrong man.

Why are lives destroyed with no cares?

Does the blame really lie else where.

Differences aside, in my heart is where all our pain
 resides.

I'll tell you, the Beat almost makes me cry.

I'm a end this here with a quote, taken from TQ's love for
 the west, and as I put my head to rest, knowing I'm going
 through the fiery furnace of times spent,
 I'll be able to figure out what to do next.

"One time for my peoples incarceration.

I give it up to you for having lots of patience" one love,



Life Leader

Whose leading your feet?
 Are you caught up in the devils deceit.
 Are you so blinded by the world that you can't see life's pearls.

The pearls of life when you live life right.
 Lets take that blindfold off and turn dark to light.

Who just unfolded life for you?
 Was it the devil whose tryin' to destroy you.
 Why would he show you wrong from right?
 He just wants to keep you and never free you.
 Keep you in bondage and a life full of carnage.

Free from what?
 Free from sin so you can live again.
 Accept Jesus and win.
 Let him take the scales off your eyes,
 No more living in lies.

Psalm 119:18 Open thou my eyes so I may behold
 wondrous things out of they law.
 Prov. 16:3 Entrust your works to Him and never fall.
 John 11:25 He is the resurrection and the life.
 John 3:3 You got to be born of the spirit to truly
 inherit...

Can you hear it?
 The kingdom of God coming.
 Look the devil, he's running.
 John 1:12 Those who believe he made the sons of God
 So why don't you follow in your fathers footsteps and
 live for eternity.
 Instead of committing and living in fire eternally.

Stand

Sojourners on this earth,
 Born to be alone.
 Knowing the cross will offend,
 This road we must travel to the end.
 Jesus will guide and provide,
 Knowing he's right by our side.
 Never fearing the flesh,
 Knowing we're eternally blessed.
 So what can man do to me,
 Knowing the Lord is true to me.
 Jesus will grab our hand,
 He will guide us to His land.

Lost Love

The touch, the feel, it was so unreal.
 The kiss, the taste, took me to another place.
 My heart, you stole, it couldn't get old
 The talk, the look, it couldn't of been took.
 Your cloths, your smell, it would cause over whelm.
 Your hair, your thighs, it was all my prize.
 Your giggles, your laugh, it was all a treasure trap.
 Your eyes, your hips, on the homeboys I'd skip.
 The time, we spent, I wouldn't trade it for the world.
 The love, was real, this I could feel.
 I played, you stayed, the down fall came.
 I left, you shook, my girl it took
 To jail, you bailed, life turned pleasure to hell.
 Locked up, you out, that fact caused doubt.
 Came back, saw you, together we knew.
 Fake love, all lies, the situation wasn't wise.
 Broke out, left you, three years it took too.
 Now I see, my faults, your number can't call.
 Moved on, separate ways, now I wish you best of days.
 Got pregnant, had a boy, it was with my homeboy
 I hope you enjoy
 Much love, to you, as we both start a new.
 Always know, this fact, that I'll always have your back.
 Remember, one thing, your names on my heart and this
 I truly mean.

Victory In Life

Do you know Jesus?
 Do you know him as your savior?
 Do you know that he died for your behavior?
 We all know sin,
 It's our closest kin.
 Now look within.
 Do you feel complete?
 Or is your soul sitting there ready to weep.
 Is something missing?
 I think you need to repent,
 Come to accept,
 Accept Christ as Lord and you won't be
 Thinking you'll need to die anymore.
 For you were dead to sin,
 Now the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.
 Lord, give us the strength to stand on our feet.
 How can we win, when we lived a life of sin.
 We were blinded, life, we couldn't find it.
 We came to a road and the end was unknown.
 Jesus was there and he showed us He cared.
 He gave us a way out to restore us of our doubt.
 So we came to know Jesus is?
 He saved us all so our sin can be absolved.
 Are you ready for His call?
 Thy will be done,
 Jesus is King of all.

*We came to a road and
 the end was unknown.*

Excuses

Always looking for myself in all the people I see
I wonder what they're seeing when they're looking back at me.

I'll tell you that I hate you, but you know that's just a lie.
You know I don't mean it 'cause I'm the one you despise.

I've got to do something, and I've got to do it now.
I've got to get to something, but I really don't know how.

It's hard to get by. It's hard to get through.
It's hard to hear me, when I'm trying to talk to you.

You see these hard eyes you know what I mean.
These eyes got so hard from everything they've seen.

I am that hard man, so hard for you to find.
I am that hard man, with an iron mind.

You turned me in, and burned me out.
You pulled me in, and locked me out.

You ripped your feelings across my back, and didn't see
me bleeding.
You turned away when I spoke, and left when I was in
needing.

I've got my arms, around myself
While you've got yours around someone else.

I didn't want this pain, but got it anyway.
I tried like hell to stop it, but it won't go away.

I hate to say I miss you, even though it's true
I hate myself for the fact that I long to kiss you.

Love can hurt to the point where you don't know what to feel, especially when you're distanced from the person you love. And when we're gone away the people who love us sometimes make excuses on why they haven't kept in touch because there is so much going on out here. When really it doesn't take long to strike up a letter to a loved one. Hell, who are we to talk? We probably do the same thing as far as not writing to certain individuals and then making excuses on why we didn't. But then again, it's different when you knew the person before they got locked up. Well, whatever the case this next writer writes a great poem about just that and we're sure many of you will be able to relate. He's writing from Frackville State Prison in Frackville, Pennsylvania.

I wrack my brain trying to remember anything I did to you
I wrack my brain trying to dismember any part still
attached to you.

I'm sorry I still feel all this pain inside
But it's like a scar on my face that I can't seem to hide.

I used to always look at you like you was on a throne
But now it's time to realize that I'm better off alone.

It hurts so much that you have noting to say
But it hurts even more when you can just walk away.

I tried to talk to you one day but you simply don't have
anything to say.
I tried to touch you that same day but all you did was slap
me away.

How could you say you love me when you left my heart
with bruises?
You must have really hated me to make up so many
excuses.

<PQ>

Always looking for myself in all the people I see
I wonder what they're seeing when they're looking back at

*Always looking for myself in all the people I see
I wonder what they're seeing when they're looking back at me.*

STEVEN AVALOY

The War Between Black And Brown

Over the last four or five years Latinos and Blacks have been at war; killing one another over drugs and territory (neighborhoods and streets). So many innocent people are dying over the black and brown war. The people that are doing the killings think that they are hurting their enemies, but they are really only hurting innocent victims: families, friends, even themselves. The saddest part about it is we are losing our children at a young age. It is really worth killing one another over drugs and a street corner?

This war allegedly started when a drug deal went sour between black and brown gang members. Now the question is: How do we stop it? People being killed for no reason.

On the other hand, Latinos are fighting a real war for the immigrant community. Thousands of students walked out of school last year, marching on to freeways, down streets and through cities. They were trying to stop the aims of some short-sighted congress persons who desire to deport people who come here fleeing from the suffering in their own countries. Back in the 60s black men were fighting for freedom and equal rights. Now here we are in the millennia

Writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, and touching on a very relevant topic, "The War Between Black And Brown," this next star writer for The Beat Without section has definitely become wiser through experience. He realizes that the war between Black and Brown is a foolish one and if we don't stop killing each other, soon there will be none of us left to kill. He's obviously speaking as someone who's been a part of this war, but what's more touching is that he's speaking as a father who doesn't want his kids to have to suffer the same mental traps he did. So, with that said, we welcome you to listen to the words of a proud father and compassionate thinker.

and people are still fighting for equal rights and freedom.

From 1955 through 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. fought for all men and women to have equal rights. Dr. King once said in this "I Have A Dream" speech: I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the son of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character: Today, many of us still share that dream.

I have two young, school-aged boys of my own. I hope that one day they can walk down the street without being shot or judged by the color of their skin.

An Introduction

I am thrilled to be able to respond to your topic. It makes my day when I have something to say about what you have chosen to write about.

Sometimes I take notice that you young folks have a tendency to talk about things that could get you in deeper shhh than you already are. So I tell you right now, what I am about to so, **DO NOT TRY THIS IN YOUR LIFE**. It could very well be hazardous to your future.

A further note, I do not write for me, I write for you. I write so you might find something in common, to give you a reason to rethink what you have decided to do with your life. You are the Master of your life, but being a Master is a real responsibility, and that first responsibility is to yourself. If you are not good to yourself then you will be no good to others in the long run.

I never write to b*tch about this and that, I am not there to get you all pissed at this and that, I believe there is a solution to every problem you have, and I will tell you something, you already have the answer in you, you just do not know how to bring it out. Those people you chose to call friends, well they are just as confused as you. There is a reason why we all arrive at the same place at the same

Our wise and good friend is back on the scene and he sends us a very stellar piece. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Coalinga, CA. He took our topic for our workshops, "If These Walls Could Talk," and made it his own. He really was able to fully captivate the topic and express it in a way that we were hoping for when we created the topic. Wisdom seeps from his pores and now onto us.

time, we are alike.

Two things you will never find me doing to you, if you are reading this I am doing something to you! And you are doing something to me, you are **TRUSTING** me, and I will never lie to you, that is the first thing, the second is I will never for the sake of "writing," put something on paper that with a little thought, you will not be able to swallow. You're a kid, I remember being a kid! I did not want to hear no shhh. So what I tell you will not choke you when you eat it. You will pass it with pleasure if you are willing. That is why I ask always. Am I lying, any questions? Don't get my drift then holla, I am writing this for you. It sure as hell ain't for the staff, hell their doing well, they got jobs, you are the one who is being locked down. If you do not like where you are at then listen. I have little to gain and everything to loose. This is real life Table Tops, make a mistake here you will be paying for it, let the state build a house off your moves and you will never wonder where you are going to lay your head tomorrow. Swallow that young folks!

I will never for the sake of "writing," put something on paper that with a little thought, you will not be able to swallow. You're a kid, I remember being a kid!

If These Walls Could Talk

If these walls could talk, they would be screaming bloody murder. That is what they have seen, bloody murder, time after time again, year after year and decade after decade after decade. Sons, brothers, fathers, and grandfathers. You name it every male in existence had died in these hallowed walls. They scream of murder.

I want to tell you about three murders, yes three murders, what got your attention? Wonder why? What is going to make you a little more? It cannot be my great writing, cause to be honest I am just not that good. I trust you will read on searching for something that makes sense, cause murder don't make sense. Murder kills a sinner sometimes, but the sin goes strolling on down the street. Looking for the next best thing to latch on to. Am I lying, don't answer yet lil folks.

Really, when you're a** gets locked up, your done deal. Tuna is the can folks, where does that sin go? Shhh travels on down the line looking for someone else strong enough, yet weak enough to carry it till it has accomplished what it needs to. I say needs to. If sins has no carrier what happens to it, well I think it just died. Granted there is sin all over, but the sin can and does die. Loves last because you hold on to it right? Well why can't sin die if you let it go? Just wondering, you tell me young folks.

So there I was a bright well to do sixteen year old kid. In a matter of hours I found myself in a situation where I killed a man, shot him. Was I in the right? Wrong or what? It does not matter, my story is not about right or wrong. It is about murder, three of them as I said. Well I had no idea of what I was getting myself into. But the end result was I killed a man. I was carted off to J.H. and then the courts

decided to try my case as an adult. Ouch! Scratch that, no ouch, at the time I had no idea what that really meant in terms of it effecting my life

So I was move from the J.H. to jail, but since I was not found guilty, they were forced to keep me separate from the other older guys, where you might ask; on the girls side of the county jail! Use your imagination, I have never been to a "real" J.H., camps, foster homes, none of the Standard Issue. So several months of court and bam, a guy who might have had it comin' but never seen it comin. I did not rob him, steal his car, did not know him, I just killed him, all in a nut shell folks, now I am in the nut shell.

I was sent to DVI at the time it was the most violent prison in America, and we were proud of that at the time, some a**holes still are, any how there I was sitting in the dayroom when this fella comes walking in he looks at me and says, "What is your name?" I say, "Mouse man." He says "Who do you ride with?" "No one" I respond. He says "Screw it, your riding with the Cas." I took one good look at and said, "No, I am NOT." He strode away. And I settled down to watch 60 Minutes, he moved to the front of the dayroom.

Moments later these two Mexican kids walked into the dayroom, and heated straight for Cas, Cas found himself deep in Iron within a few seconds, I mean deep, these kids were so intent on killing him they murdered the wooden bench behind him as well. I saw poor Cas get whittled from a stump to a twig in the matter of seconds. Nothing pretty about it, nothing glorious about it. A man was being killed again.

After they killed Cas, Cas arose like a spirit and moved his way to the back of the dayroom, he kicked the door as best as he could, but no one heard him or they just ignored

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him, you make the call. Cas dropped like a fish out of water and for all intent, he drowned in his own blood. The last I saw of Cas was him gasping, and not having enough energy to lift himself out of a puddle of his own blood, bubbles was the last noise Cas made.

I tried real hard to care about Cas, but I had bigger troubles and with a capital "T" this his Mexican kid was comin' straight for me now, I thought O' Shhh! I froze, he looked at me and asked, "What did you see!" I said, "Nothing." Quickly turning to see where his counter part was, not that I was going to do anything but freeze some more, I just wanted to know. I saw him, and he was white ghost. I seen things killed before and I have seen killers, they do not turn white after a killing. I said, "I am not the one you got to worry about." And this kid who resembled Godzilla to me, went back to his biz. As it turns out I was right, he did not have to worry about me, the kid he killed this guy with turned states evidence against him, putting him on Death Row.

Well, sooner or later to be real, the cops found poor Cas lying face down, life oozing from his body, spirit long being gone. Another man murdered in these hallowed halls. These walls have seen generation after generation lying face down. Many are the pints of blood willingly spilled. Sometimes for mock reason, sometimes for no reason at all. Murder is what these walls know all too well.

Seems there is always a murder and always a body. Always a area where it happens more than anyplace else, Bloody Alley in DVI, no place to be found slippin', no place to found cold and lifeless. One might find it hard to even call it a crime scene after all these years, after all the places just moves from here to there, sin is picked up and carried to it's next destination carried by the willing.

The most violent murder I save for last, it takes place in a cell, yet there is but one person in the cell. The walls they see, the walls they have ears. Good God almighty the walls have mouths, and they are hungry. I sat there on my bed. Thinking about what I had done to arrive at a place like this, but there was no reason within my young mind, it was as if all the beautiful paintings of my life had been thrown together making a mockery of color, producing nothing special. In fact, it was hard to look at, my life that is and harder to accept was the sentence I was given, a top life term.

Trying to reason what I could not, I literally began to shake and sweat. I just remember thinking, I do not belong here! I am not like them! I did not mean for it to be like this! Then the realization, "They are going to eat me up! I am just a kid in adult prison!" The average age was 27, I was just turning 17.

What am I going to do? How am I going to do? Where am I going to do? Despite I was sent to prison for murder, I felt I was not a killer at heart. I knew if given the chance I was a mild mannered person, kind and polite, but I picked something up and it stuck with me till it was done with me. I was a fake killer among real killers. Did not matter that

some of them could not hold there mug. It mattered that they were capable of killing and I was not in truth.

So, in a moment of unbridled thought, I killed one more time. I took what goodness was left in me and I drug that kicking screaming child out of me and I drew the biggest knife I could find, in a act of pagan ritual, I killed him. I cast his spent body to the four winds. I held no service other than kicking him out of my way. This little punk was not going to survive this place.

I murdered the one true Mouse man, when I exited the cell, I was a crueller version of me, I was not going to be drowning in a puddle of my own blood. That was my first year in prison, and as you might be able to tell I have done some evil since then. As it goes one fine day I wondered what would have happened to Cas had I rode with him? Would we both been killed, would Cas had lived? Would those guys seeing two changed their minds? Then it dawned on me, what about me? What would have happened had I not killed the kid in me that night? What would I have been? Where would have my life taken me, what would I have accomplished?

I have a lot of unanswered folks, and I always ask myself am I lying to myself. Am I seeing clearly what needs to be done. Maybe I should have let that kid live, maybe he would have found a way out of all this BS. We will never know, that was the third murder these walls have spoke of.

I do understand that these walls have seen a lot, but I wonder is it all they will ever see. I have one goal for myself, this had nothing to do with anyone in the world but Mouse man. I need to see what I am capable of, I may never get out of prison, but I really figure I need to bring something back to life to at least feel I am not imprisoned, and that is the little Mouse man I murdered. I am currently raising him from the dead.

Where you have been indicated where you are going to be, to a degree, if you want to stay in one place than you are on the right track. If you want to be some place else then you might want to listen to someone who has been where you are headed and you might want to listen to someone who is not full of anger at the system or any of that BS. I mean to hurt no ones feelings but, as I see it, a man who has thirty years plus in the place. I know one thing for sure, you will not conquer society and all it's faults till you have arrested your own. You do not need a dictionary to read what I am saying, all you need is a half brain as I am not that smart. Need some advise then ask someone who is not angry, ask someone who has not killed there youth, ask someone who has accomplished some goals.

Yes, these walls do talk, and some day they are going to talk about me. And what they say is going to be a shock, nothing died here, I thrust my youth to the flame, that much is true. But I do not believe I need to stay in the fire just because I made a serious mistake. My biggest mistake was never asking someone who knew better, or never listening. Am I lying lil folks? Any questions?

Then the realization, "They are going to eat me up! I am just a kid in adult prison!" The average age was 27, I was just turning 17.

How long are we going to embrace the negative side of our culture? We must change ourselves then help influence others. What better way then for dope dealers, gang members, pimps and prostitutes to spill truth to the next person to prevent them from being unknowing victims of the hype? What better testimony is there for people then reformed "criminals" making a change to better our degrading generation? This can only be done by truthful knowledge of what is right and wrong. We must change to better our situation. It will not change on it's own. How long will people close their eyes and ears? How long are we going to allow this foolishness to destroy us? How long are we going to conform to the destruction?

read the rest of TWrex's BWO piece on page 56

